THE WORLD'S BIGGEST GAMECUBE MAGAZINE!

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INDEPENDENT NINTENDO

ZELDA
THE WIND WAKER
WORLD'S BIGGEST REVIEW!



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A LINK TO THE PAST

Way back in issue 24 of **NGC** Magazine, when I was but a callow youth, I reviewed *Zelda: Ocarina of Time*. The game had been released practically simultaneously in Japan and the US, with the UK just a few short weeks behind, for once. I had a fortnight to play the game and write a 14-page review. It was, to put it lightly, a lot of work. But it was also *exciting*. Thrilling. The rest of the world was going nuts over *OOT*, one mainstream US mag going so far as to call it the *Citizen Kane* of videogames, and it was hard not to get caught up in the rush (even if writing 14 packed review pages was somewhere on the wrong side of gruelling). The release of *Ocarina of Time* was a genuine event.

WIND OF CHANGE

And now comes *The Wind Waker*. It's not quite the same this time around, mainly because it won't reach UK shops until the 3rd of May. And, of course, we don't know half of what's going on in the Japanese version of the game – but that makes the sheer beauty of Shigsy's latest classic all the more evident. It's quite astonishing to see, even more so to play, and old trooper Zy, dragged out of retirement for one last review, was utterly delighted with the game. We can only hope that the eventual PAL translation is as wittily scripted as it is astonishingly designed. And if you you're not going to give *Zelda* a chance because of the new look, then frankly you don't deserve it anyway.

ULTIMATE ADVENTURES

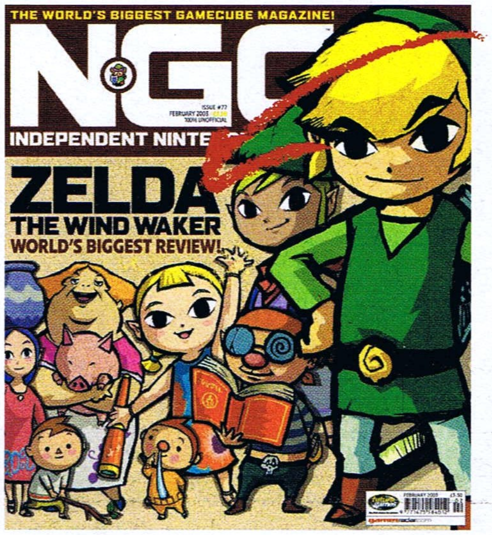
In fact, it's been something of a *Zelda*-tastic month, as we've also got hold of *A Link to The Past* on the GBA, and the much talked-about *Ura Zelda* bonus disc. But that's enough of our good fortune – in a few scant weeks you, dear reader, finally get to play *Metroid Prime* and *Resident Evil Zero*, and go online with *Phantasy Star* (see page 22 for more on this). Not a bad start to 2003, eh? And I haven't even mentioned the stunning new Game Boy Advance SP…

Jes Bickham Editor
ngc@futurenet.co.uk

TURN TO PAGE 26
…right now for our verdict on the latest *Zelda* gem.

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!
Turn to page 102, Get three free issues AND a free Gamecube joypad when you subscribe to **NGC**!

TURN OVER THE PAGE!
*For five of the tippity-toppest things in this Link-lovin' issue of **NGC**!*



WHAT'S IN THE MAG?

PREVIEWS

NEWS

REVIEWS

EXTENDED PLAY

NGC'S FIVE STAR GUIDE TO WHAT'S UNMISSABLE THIS ISSUE!

1 PAGE 26



ZELDA

The Wind Waker is upon us! But can it be better than *Mario* and *Metroid*? We know the answer!



MORTAL KOMBAT

2 PAGE 38

The latest in the franchise, and a fitting return to form. Spill hot claret and slap manly cheeks.



MEET ENJiKi

Yes, yes, we know that technically, she should be called 'Enjici'. But that doesn't sound as good, does it? So back off, brother. Ahem. Anyhoo, Enjiki is your guide to the magazine; she'll be enticing you into the various sections of the magazine in a manner far more pleasing than would otherwise be provided by the lumpen **NGC** *team. Dan tried Enjiki's jumpsuit on the other day and the results weren't very appealing, not least to Dan himself. Hernias are painful things.*





PAGE 26



ZELDA THE WIND WAKER

REVIEWED AND RATED!

Could this be Link's greatest adventure yet? We put the Japanese version of the game through its paces…

3 PAGE 44



BOUNTY HUNTER

Wear the helmet, shoot the guns, and bear the name of Jango with pride.

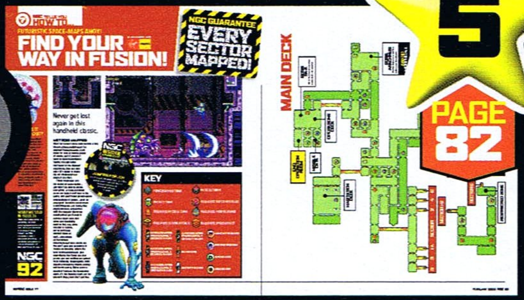


ZELDA GBA

4 PAGE 62

A Link to The Past makes a link to the present and leaps onto GBA with stunning results. Now with multiplayer!

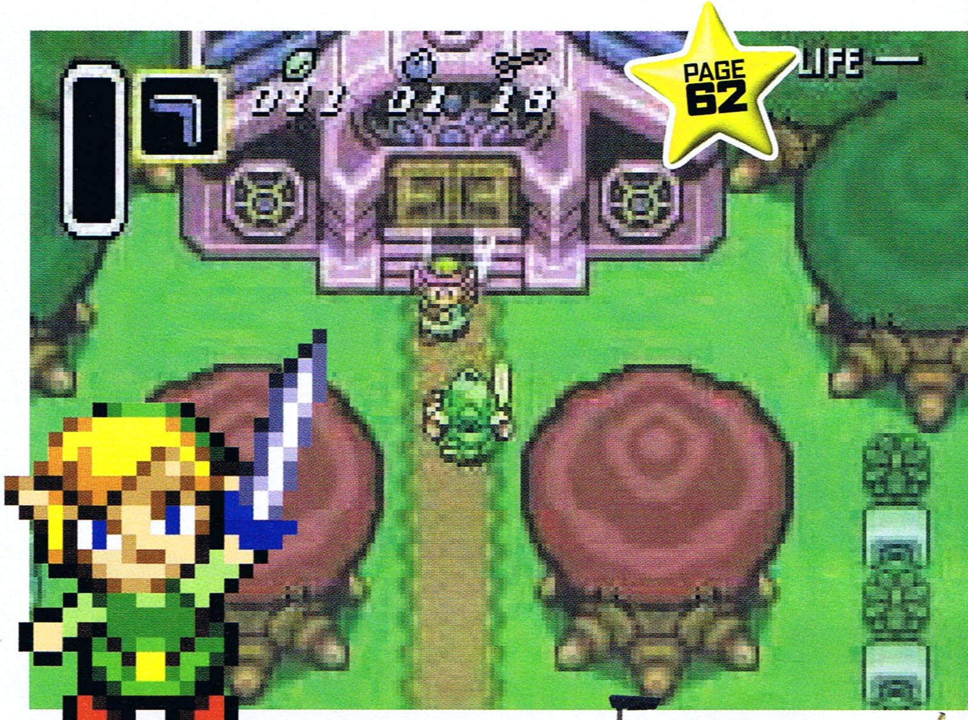
5 PAGE 82



METROID MAPS

Lost in *Metroid Fusion*? Be lost no more as we comprehensively map the game for your delight and delectation.









OUR PROMISE

Our previews go further and give you more than any other mag. We analyse every single screenshot to ensure that you're given every... last... detail... We also aim to provide you with an honest appraisal of how the game's shaping up – we won't pretend a game is good when it's not, but we'll also scream at you when it is.

NGC PREVIEWS THIS MONTH

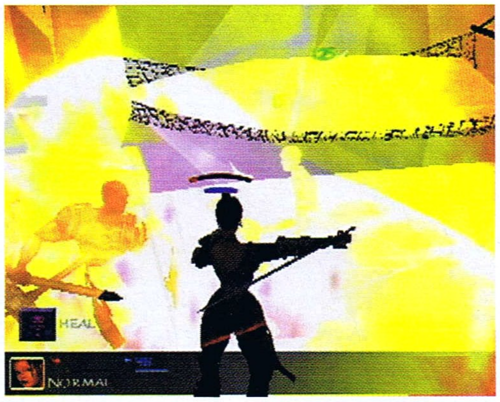








△ Real-time combat makes a refreshing change from your standard turn-based affair…



△ Magic can be assigned to hot-keys for quicker casting.









△ Your allies aren't exactly the cleverest bunch of mates.

SUMMONER A GODDESS REBORN

An RPG! For Gamecube! Our prayers have been truly answered! Or not…



△ The AI of both your allies and the bungling enemies is poor. Your mates, for example, will just stand there while you get stabbed in the back.

Oh dear! Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear. It's *very* rarely that we get preview code in this kind of shape, but this *really* takes the biscuit. The PS2 version of this game is perfectly competent and in places, rather enjoyable, but from what we've seen of this port so far, it's *completely* unacceptable. Okay, so this *is* a preview and there's some way to go (we *hope*) before this is truly finished, so we'll try to reserve judgement for the time being… and get on with the story.

You're Maia, Queen of the Halassar and the, er, Saviour of All Creation – but it seems not everyone is totally convinced about your credentials. With a mounting horde of enemies defiantly opposing you, it's up to you to fulfil your prophecy and become the Goddess Laharah. Presumably so you can crush some infidels.

As with any prophecy worth its salt, you have to trek off halfway across the world and battle all those who dare stand in your way. As usual, many of the tried-and-tested RPG ingredients are in here, such as the ability to command multiple members of your party – all of whom have a unique range of combat and magic skills. Naturally, dispatching

What's being conjured up for RPG nuts?



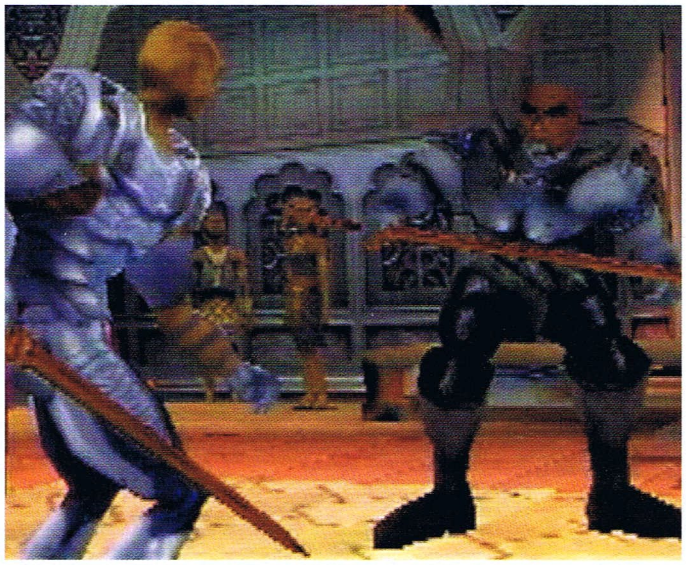
△ From what we've played so far, the battle sequences need to be tidied up a great deal. The collision detection leaves a lot to be desired, while the balancing of damage and power between allies and enemies needs to be vastly improved.



△ Many of the locations are actually very nice, and the story arc itself is rather well told. It's just a shame that it all currently looks ugly as sin.



△ Raise levels to gain extra spells.



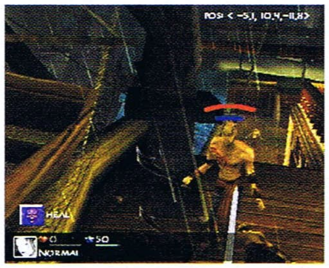
△ Cut-scenes aplenty help drive the intriguing narrative forward.



△ Oooh! Stats… text menus… mmm.



△ This pirate is a real swine to beat…



△ …unlike his puny friend here.

TECHNICAL



Visually speaking, *Summoner*'s not looking up to much at the moment. Your character seems to be detached from the environment she's in. The animation is ropey while the jaggies make it look like something out of a bygone age.

The collision detection is also laughable, with characters who are standing back to back still receiving damage from each other. No matter how good the story, these problems are potentially devastating. Must try harder.

enemies will bump up your EXP quota to add strength to your team. Item management will also feature heavily, with characters upgrading weapons and armour to ensure they're always competitive in battle.

There are, of course, a number of unique touches to get to grips with. Maia can summon and transform herself into ultra-powerful otherworldly beasts in order to wreak havoc on multiple enemies at once, for example. Furthermore, *Summoner: A Goddess Reborn* also ditches sluggish turn-based combat in favour of a quasi-real-time system. Controlling Maia for example, you can run freely (as well as rotate the camera around you) and dish out combos. Once you've finished your flurry there's a slight pause before you can attack again. This actually makes for a far more involved battling experience, and the relentless action means that employing differing strategies such as healing and magic needs to be well thought-out if you don't want to be caught out. It does sound promising enough on paper, but the bit where we normally say 'should be good' (like, around here) isn't going to happen this time. *Summoner* clearly has a long, long way to go yet…

> **"SUMMONER DITCHES SLUGGISH TURN-BASED COMBAT FOR A QUASI-REAL-TIME SYSTEM"**

NGC VERDICT

It's hard to know where to start to be honest with you. The Gamecube needs a solid RPG to add to its ranks, but unfortunately it doesn't look as though *Summoner* is going to deliver. True enough, it's not finished yet, but the staggering amount of problems we witnessed in the game's opening moments is hardly encouraging. The camera refuses to keep track of your movement. The enemies' attacks are brutal and unforgiving while the collision detection is so bad we're having difficulties describing it. It's a shame, because the game does show *some* promise, with some strong dialogue, lovely locations and an involving story arc. It just needs to be tidied up. A lot. Here's hoping that there's enough time to see it right.



UK	US	JAPAN
SUMMER	SPRING	TBC

WHAT WE WANT TO SEE INCLUDED

- Improved collision detection. If a sword isn't actually hitting you, why for the love of Sunny Jesus are you taking damage?
- Tighter camera control. It would be great if you could actually *see* yourself when you're running around the screen.
- Improved visuals. The amount of jaggies is painful to the eye. It's so bad it almost harks back to 32-bit days. Unacceptable.

ANTICIPATION RATING

1 **2** 3 4 5

FIRST-EVER CONSOLE RPG? Well, the jury is still out on that one, but many fingers point at the Atari 2600's *Dragonstomper*. An extremely basic adventure, it had random encounters and even a boss battle at the end.

ICE PICS!

We grab you by the lapels like a school bully in a winter playground, and stuff freezing hard lumps of screenshots from NST's killer update of the best 'boarding game ever into your face and eyes and down your jumper, like giant pieces of hard, dirty snow. Until you cry.





THE KNOWLEDGE

- **Sequel to the N64 original, developed by Nintendo's own NST, who were behind the marvellous *Wave Race: Blue Storm* and the N64-based *Ridge Racer 64*. It was originally in development by *Excitebike 64* developers Left Field.**
- **Board at high speed down sheer drops, over a variety of different snowy surfaces, outrunning avalanches.**
- **Brilliantly subtle yet intuitive control system, allowing for a huge degree of control and stunt action.**
- **Two-player mode for chum-on-chum fun.**

THIS LOT ALSO DID...

- **1080° Snowboarding (NGC/21)**
Astonishing, genre-defining snowboarding classic, developed by Ninty's in-house US team. Just super.



△ **Expect tunnels, drops and shortcuts aplenty.**



△ **The snow is recreated just perfectly. Mmmm.**



△ **The views are incredible. Just look at that!**

1080°: AVALANCHE

The Best Snowboarding Game Ever Made returns. Hoo-ha!

One of the things that defined the N64 – aside from *Mario 64*, or *Ocarina of Time*, or *GoldenEye* or *Perfect Dark* (you get the idea) – was that it hosted a loose trilogy of astonishing racing games. *Wave Race*, *Excitebike* and the original *1080°* all had one thing in common – magnificent analogue handling that responded brilliantly to every wave, bump, scree slope or bank of snow. The feedback between environment and control was exemplary, and, like *Mario 64*, different elements of the worlds found in each game had their own properties that dictated what you had to do to stay in control. And with the advent of *1080° Avalanche*, the Gamecube seems intent on hosting next-gen iterations of these games (although *Excitebike* has yet to be announced. But we live in hope).

Let's get one thing straight, though – this is no *SSX Tricky*. It's all about tight handling and shaving seconds off your racing time while grappling with a treacherous racing surface. Stunts obviously play a significant part in the game, but it's skilful racing action coupled with a typically Nintendo-esque intuitive control system that is the order of the day here – with an accent on 'realism', something that The Big N don't really

"POWDERY SNOW IS THROWN OUT BEHIND YOU IN THE MOST WONDERFUL MANNER"

RACE!



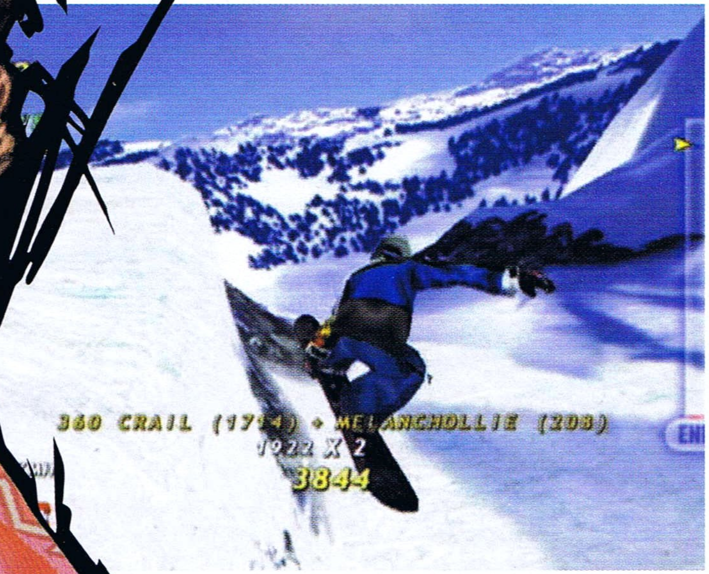
The original game featured a rather perfunctory two-player mode – hopefully the equivalent in *Avalanche* will be faster and more thrilling. Technically, the Gamecube should easily be able to handle it.

It's looking decidedly all white, that's for sure





△ In the N64 *1080°* you could only race against one character at a time – hopefully *Avalanche* will see more human activity on the slopes.



△ We're too old to understand all these obscure stunt names. Why not call them something more civilised, such as 'jolly nice jump'?



△ The half-pipe makes a welcome return for those who like their stuntin'. Nice trousers.



△ Expect a raft of different characters to choose from.



△ They may wear silly baggy clothes, but they still fly down sheer drops at remarkable speeds. Probably something to do with gravity rather than clothing.

tend to have much stock with usually.

If you've played the N64 game you'll know pretty much what to expect here, except that it's now a million times prettier, and the levels are *gigantic*, with multiple routes through each. What's most impressive – apart from the sense of scale and sheer, cheek-flapping speed – are the little touches. Clothes ripple in the wind, sun glares off ice, and different types of frozen stuff make grappling with your 'boarder a joy. Especially when you plough through a deep bank of powdery snow – it's thrown out behind you in the most wonderful manner.

So, while it has to be said that things are looking pretty similar to before, it's all been polished to perfection and looks astonishing. Of course, Nintendo are keeping any surprises hidden; we've yet to see any of the titular avalanches, for example, and the variety of levels has only been hinted at.

Predictably, the game hasn't yet got a UK release date, but it's out in the US in April. Hopefully we won't have to wait too long after that for some sweet PAL snowboard action.

NGC VERDICT

It's still early days for *1080: Avalanche*, with payable code only surfacing at US Cube Clubs so far. But we've seen extensive video footage of the game and it's looking cracking. Granted, at the moment the game seems to be little more than a graphical overhaul of the original *1080° Snowboarding* on N64, but that's fine by us. One of the criticisms we did level at the N64 *1080°* was that, while the handling was magnificent, it was also horribly unforgiving and betrayed you at the most inopportune moments. Hopefully this is no longer the case. Also, some of the textures seem loose and undefined, and the 30 frames-per-second frame-rate might have technical geeks up in arms. But really, if it plays well, who cares?



UK	US	JAPAN
TBA	APRIL	APRIL

WHAT WE WANT TO SEE INCLUDED

- The ability to create your own 'boarders, rather than be stuck with dullards like Ricky Winterbourne.
- A much-improved multiplayer mode, that includes a decent draw-distance and frame-rate.
- Cardiac arrest-inducing avalanche outrunning, and other such adrenaline-based racing events. Please.

ANTICIPATION RATING

1 2 3 **4** 5

DID YOU KNOW? When *1080° Snowboarding* originally came out, it took ages to get a PAL release, because THE Games – Nintendo's UK PR and distribution arm – didn't think the game would sell in the summer months. Hmm...

BUYING THE FARM

We love *Harvest Moon*. Outside of Nintendo's own major franchises, it's the most consistently excellent game series around, and as soon as the Japanese version is out, we'll brush up on our Hiragana for an import review.



THE KNOWLEDGE

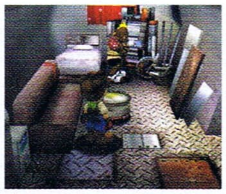
- Build a home, farm the land, get married and raise children.
- Create hybrid vegetables using the power of science.
- Breed a wide variety of brand new livestock.
- More than 40 characters to interact with, including six potential brides.
- Up to 30 years of game time.
- Connects to the Game Boy Advance version, unlocking new events, additional dialogue, and story changes.
- Exclusive to Gamecube.

THIS LOT ALSO DID...

- **Harvest Moon 64 (NGC/39)** An adorable tear-jerker of an RPG, never released in the UK.
- **HM: Back To Nature (PlayStation)** Same characters as the N64 game, slightly different story.



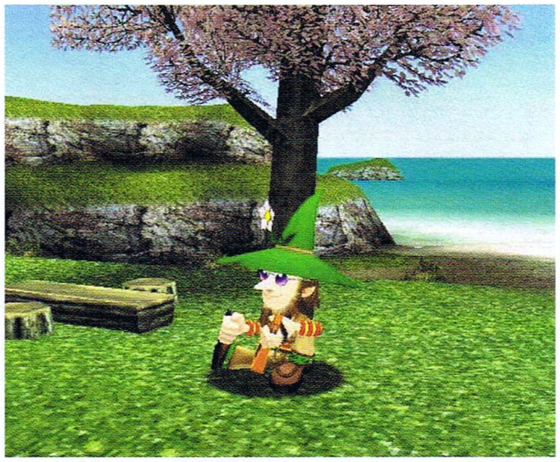
△ Harvesting crops is the fastest way to boost that bank account. As well as fruit and veg, you can also grow ornamental flowers.



△ Tidy that room if you want to impress ladies.



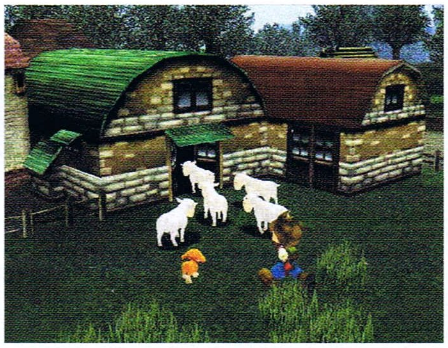
△ Non-player characters have their own problems.



△ After his traditional Christmas Guinness binge, our own Dan Geary staggered back from Ireland dressed exactly like this.



△ As if crops aren't interesting enough. This must be some kind of special incubator for baby cows.



△ Around the corner, your faithful hound herds unsuspecting sheepies towards the abattoir.



△ Once the horse is fully grown you'll be able to ride around naked on its back, like a male Lady Godiva.

HARVEST MOON A WONDERFUL LIFE

A heady mixture of agriculture and dating, in Gamecube's first faming RPG.

The Japanese release has been shifted back from December of last year to an as-yet unspecified date between now and April. Worryingly, there's still no news at all about a UK version. But we can't help drooling in anticipation at the thought of playing *Harvest Moon: A Wonderful Life* on Gamecube.

It promises to be the biggest, most expansive instalment to date in the long-running rural RPG series. Forget the one- or two-year time limits of previous games – this one spans an entire generation as you work the land, make lifelong friends, and even raise a family down on the farm.

If you've never tried *Harvest Moon* in the past, you've missed some of the most loveable and compelling RPGs ever made. But don't worry, because *A Wonderful Life* looks set to be the definitive entry in the series.

The aim of the game is simply to live, work, and become a decent, popular member of the community. Sort of like a more structured version of *Animal Crossing*, if you will.

You play a young lad who inherits his grandfather's run-down farm, and much of the first few months of game time are spent digging the overgrown soil, planting crops, and repairing the ramshackle hut you have to live in.

Anything you grow can be traded with the other villagers, in exchange for better farm equipment, fun bonus items such as fishing rods or butterfly nets, and gifts for some lucky girl.

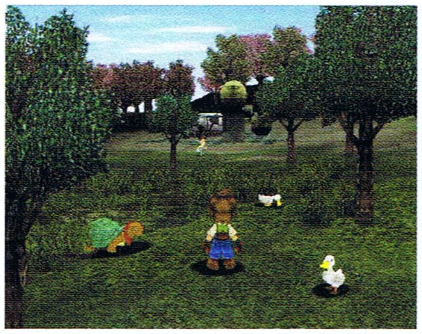
Because it's a mixture of socialising and hard work, and the days seem to pass very quickly, the challenge is in



△ The townsfolk don't mind you rummaging around in their property.



△ Cows need regular brushing if you want them to make milk, not burgers.



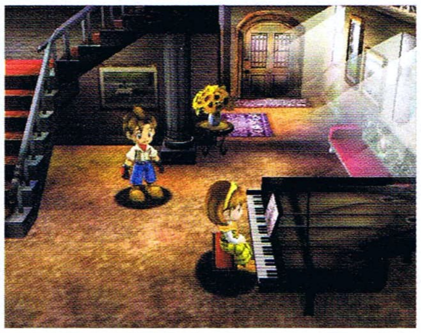
△ Down by the pond, where the ducks roam free and the giant turtles wear red neckerchiefs.



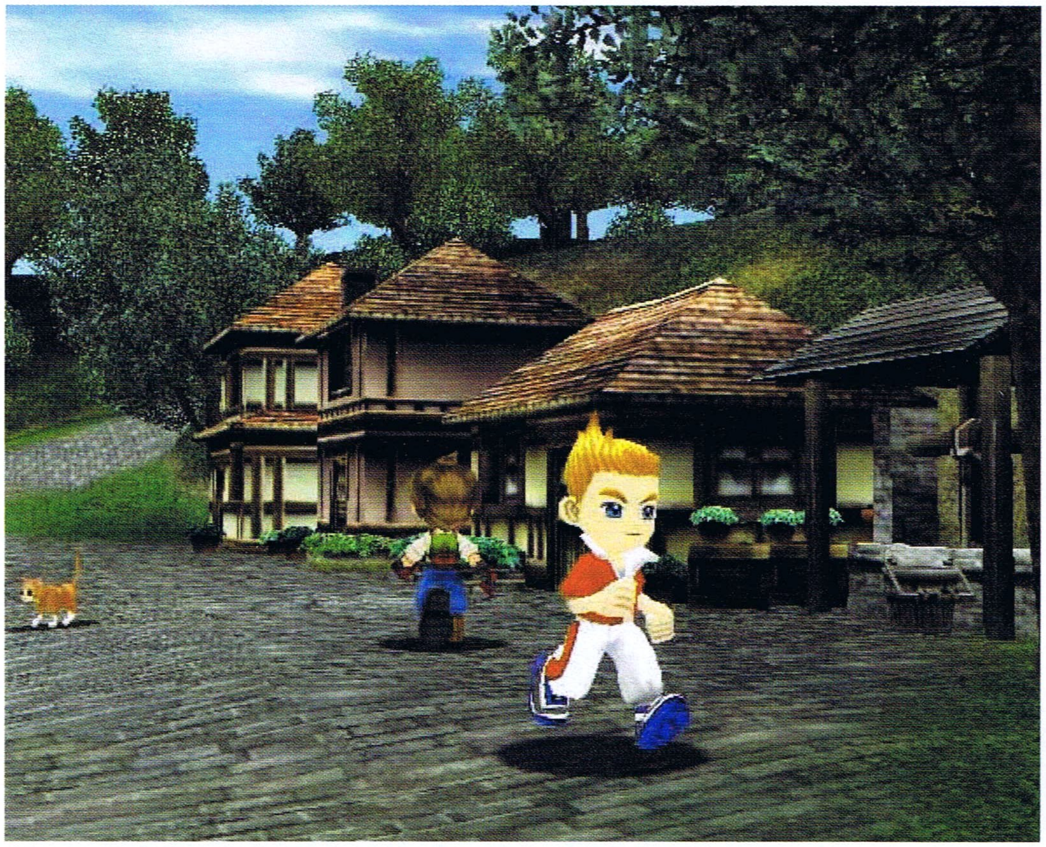
△ Setting out for a day trip to the mountains, where harvest sprites live in a funky grotto.



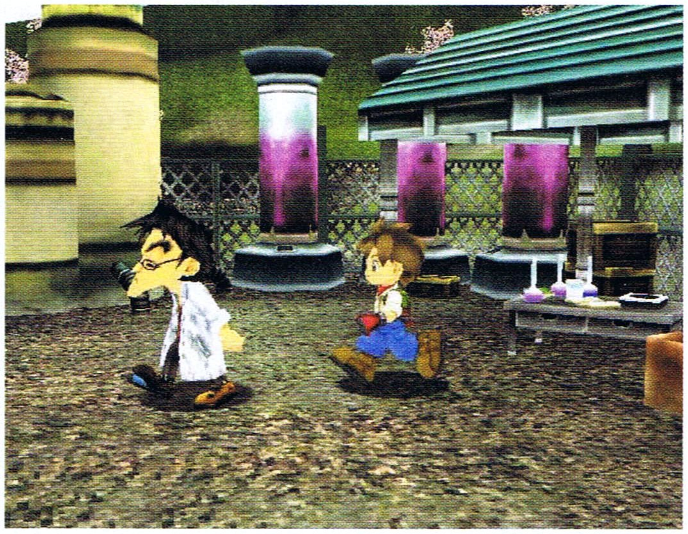
△ If you can't be bothered to mow the meadow, your animals will make short work of it for you.



△ This is where you're supposed to lean on the piano and start crooning like a lovesick whale.



△ That 'jogging' pastime is only for those who don't have a thriving farming business to take care of.



△ Biotechnology in a *Harvest Moon* game? Let's hope the designers include some sort of moral penalty for those who choose the wicked ways of the herbicide.

FARM BOY



A GBA edition will be released at the same time, featuring a remixed village and a different set of events. The two games can be linked, although we're not sure exactly how it's going to work. Japanese publishers Victor Interactive say the GBA game will unlock a new story path in the other version. It's also possible to take your Gamecube character into the GBA game, presumably to continue farming on the move.

finding the ideal balance between your morning chores and afternoon leisure activities. Special events occur on certain days, and missing them won't impress the other villagers. The farm business needs to be sorted in time to catch the big parade or festival, where the local girls are on the lookout for potential husbands.

exploring whatever's hidden in the mountains is truly mouth-watering.

Unfortunately, for female readers, there doesn't appear to be the option to play as a girl. Due to popular demand, Japanese players got a special *Harvest Moon For Girls* on PlayStation, which featured a pink watering can and a set of willing

"THE AIM IS SIMPLY TO LIVE, WORK, AND BECOME A DECENT MEMBER OF THE COMMUNITY"

Like most other *Harvest Moon* updates, it's essentially a larger, more impressive version of the previous instalment. Of course, it's never looked quite as good as it does on the Gamecube, and the prospect of riding around the lush 3D farmland and

bachelors to marry. The Game Boy versions gave you a choice, but then they didn't have the complication of the dating game aspect. *A Wonderful Life* makes no such concession, but it's definitely something that will appeal to all ages. And sexes.

NGC VERDICT

Long-standing readers will know how highly we rate this series (90 per cent for the N64 version more than two years ago), and we've yet to be disappointed by any of the *Harvest Moon* games we've played so far – three on the Game Boy, the SNES and N64 ones, plus the PlayStation remix. As long as the developers manage to get reasonably slick results from the Gamecube, we can't see *Harvest Moon*'s 100 per cent strike rate being affected when *A Wonderful Life* is released. That's expected to be some time in the summer for the US. We really need a UK version, though. Fingers crossed.



UK TBA | US 2003 | JAPAN SPRING

WHAT WE WANT TO SEE INCLUDED

- Giving it a UK release would be enough for starters.
- The graphics look a little bit grainy in these screenshots, as if the Gamecube's built-in filters aren't being used. Turn them on.
- It needs to run smoothly. It doesn't need to look like *Zelda*, but it could do without any choppiness.

ANTICIPATION RATING

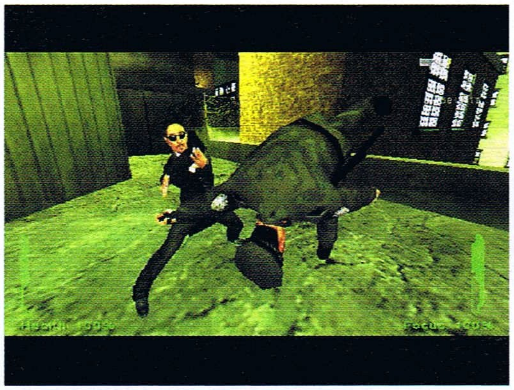
1 2 3 4 **5**

COMING SOON...

We'll be the first Nintendo magazine to actually get our hands on the game, and no doubt discover some more top-secret info regarding the forthcoming movie sequels, when we visit Shiny Entertainment's development team next month.



△ There's always a rozzer around when you don't need one.



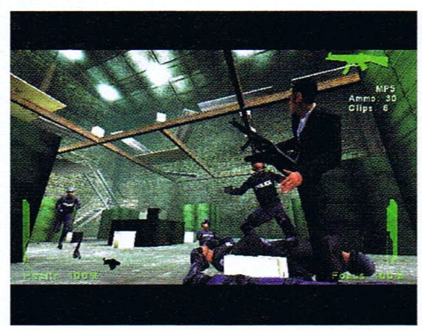
△ Don't mess with a Jedi master. Isn't that what they say?



△ Meet Niobe, Morpheus' old flame. She can run up walls, do karate and dodge bullets with the best of them, but for some reason he didn't think she was 'the one' for him. So she married Will Smith instead.



△ "Like a weasel spinning in a mad zone." That's our *Matrix.*



△ We're a lot more excited about the movies, to be honest, but this game does look promising.



△ A location from the next movie? Or isn't that set mostly on an agent-packed freeway?



THE KNOWLEDGE

- **A companion piece to this year's two Matrix sequels.**
- **Produced by Shiny Entertainment, with assistance from the Wachowski brothers (the mysterious duo that wrote and directed the movies).**
- **Utilises 'previously unseen' techniques, and technology based on one of the same design team's other games, *Sacrifice* for the PC.**
- **Starring Will Smith's missus, Jada Pinkett-something-or-other. Not Keanu Reeves, who's a bit Tom Cruise when it comes to console likenesses.**

THIS LOT ALSO DID...

- **MDK**
(PC)
Influential platform shooter that pioneered the now-familiar sniper-scope zoom feature.

ENTER THE MATRIX

Two movies, one anime DVD, and a top-secret game...

When as respected a journal as *Newsweek* confidently declares that 2003 will be the Year of The Matrix, you know that there's more than the usual Hollywood hype machine at work.

With the first long-awaited movie sequel due in May, an animated DVD version called The Animatrix due in the summer, and the second (jaw-droppingly expensive) sequel following in November, you won't be able to avoid Neo and Trinity, even if, for some reason, you wanted to.

And riding the phenomenal wave of publicity and expectation comes the first videogame adaptation of the movie trilogy – *Enter The Matrix.*

Instead of following the exact plot of any of the films, the game will be a separate, self-contained side-story, rather like the nine shorts featured in The Animatrix. Characters and situations from the films will be used, and the Wachowski brothers have been directly involved from an early stage in production, to ensure that the game enhances, rather than cheapens, the movies' mythology.

And because it's developed in conjunction with the publicity-shy brothers, and features scenes that could spoil the surprises in store for the first sequel, The Matrix Reloaded, it's being kept behind tight security at Infogrames HQ. Next month, we'll have all the details.

NGC VERDICT

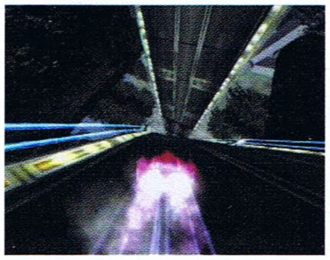
This film has a special place in our hearts, being arguably the coolest thing ever committed to celluloid. Naturally, we were a bit worried about how it would fare as a videogame, but if the Wachowskis think it's good enough, then it probably is. There's no sign of the set pieces from Reloaded (Neo facing off against 100 Agent Smiths, anyone?) but then the situations in the game will be tailored to suit its medium, rather than be over-ambitious.



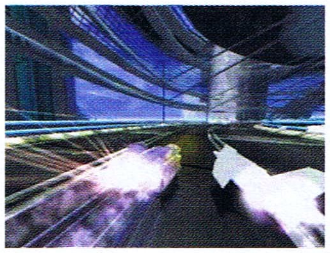
UK	US	JAPAN
MAY	MAY	TBA

ANTICIPATION RATING

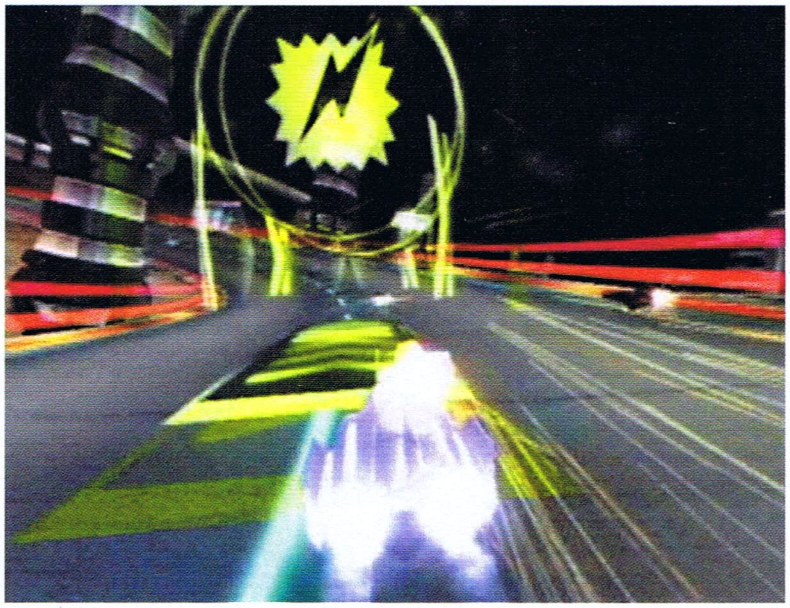
1 2 3 **4** 5



△ The fastest game alive, that's *F-Zero*. Expect much cheek-flapping.



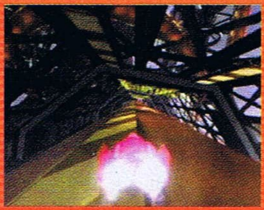
△ The environments are more detailed than before, as you can see.



△ Let's hope that the ever popular Death Race mode is still included. Good, clean, violent fun.

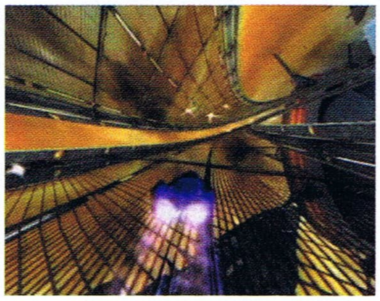


△ Ah, good old Captain Falcon. The meanest nipples in town. Fact.



THE KNOWLEDGE

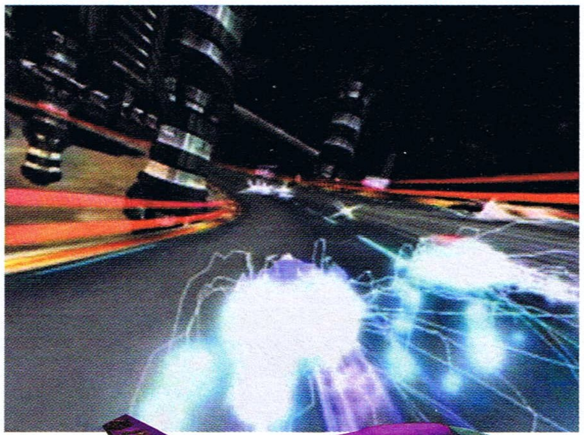
- High-speed racing with no rules – zoom past your rivals or take time to make it personal, knocking them off the track.
- Developed by Sega's Amusement Vision team.
- Memory card link-up with the arcade version, which will run on the Gamecube-based Triforce board designed by Sega, Namco and Nintendo.
- All the original characters and vehicles return, including Captain Falcon and that car that looks like a big pink bus.
- Background scenery vastly improved since the N64 version. Grand.



△ This track reminds us of *Episode 1: Racer*.



△ The N64 version had squillions of vehicles.



△ Whoosh!

F-ZERO



Prepare for the ride of your life, in the fastest thing on no wheels.

Remember the thrill you felt when you saw the original SNES *F-Zero* in action for the first time? No game had ever looked so good or moved so fast, and it was enough to convince anyone of the console's raw power.

Then *F-Zero X* for the N64 raised the stakes in terms of speed, and threw in 29 aggressive rivals. But despite being, in **NGC**'s opinion, a superior game to the SNES version, its spartan graphics meant it went largely unnoticed, with only hardcore gamers paying much attention.

So now we're waiting for *F-Zero* on Gamecube, which mixes the slick gameplay of the N64 version with the visual wow factor of the SNES one. And very nice it looks, too.

We still haven't had the chance to find out how it plays in its newly enhanced form, as the only things the developers at Sega have been allowed to release to the eager world so far are videos and screenshots.

But from what we can gather, it's essentially the N64 version with a new lick of paint. The tubular tracks return, as do those fiendish rival racers, and there are now some great background environments.

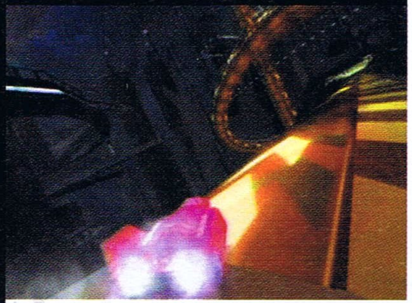
The boost chevrons painted on the track are now made more visible, thanks to bright yellow icons floating above each one. Check out these new screenshots, and cross your fingers.

THIS LOT ALSO DID...

- **Super Monkey Ball (NGC/67)**
Ape-based fun with monkeys in balls, from the same Sega team behind this *F-Zero* update.

NGC VERDICT

If the Sega folk can do as good a job on *F-Zero* as they did on their previous racing title, *Daytona*, then this should be a fitting update to the excellent *F-Zero X*. The simple good looks of *Monkey Ball* show that they've got a good grasp of Gamecube's hardware, and judging from the slickness of the latest video footage released, *F-Zero* will be by far the prettiest racer on the console. We probably won't get our hands on it until the E3 show, next May.



UK	US	JAPAN
2003	2003	2003

ANTICIPATION RATING

1 2 3 4 **5**




SEGA RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

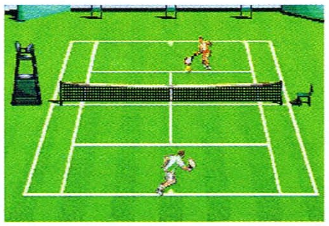
High-speed GBA off-roading.

Remember this from the arcades and the Sega Saturn? It's back, in wee handheld form and taking full advantage of the latest coding techniques on GBA.

While it looks quite similar to the impressive *V-Rally*, with proper 3D graphics throughout, it's actually extremely quick – faster than you'd expect most ordinary 2D racers to be.

The tracks appear to be remixed versions of the originals, along with a selection of new environments exclusive to the GBA version. Even though the textures are distinctly low-resolution, the tiny screen and the sheer speed things it mean that you don't really notice the blockiness as your car skids around corners at over 100mph.

It isn't quite as polished as the old Saturn version was, but it's going to give *V-Rally* a real run for its money. The game is out now in Japan, with a UK release in April.




VIRTUA TENNIS

Four-player serve and volley.

The longer Nintendo holds back *Mario Tennis* (which is now scheduled for a winter release over in Japan), the more chance Sega has to sew things up with this Game Boy Advance version of the smash-hit racquet-sim that appeared on Dreamcast.

Due out over here in March, *Virtua Tennis* offers plenty of tour modes, some licensed player names and RPG-style upgradeable stats. It also features eight new minigames involving animals, eggs and burgers, which is something we've never encountered in any previous tennis games. Forget champagne and strawberries – it would certainly liven up Wimbledon if they went down this route in the summer.

The graphics aren't really up to much but the gameplay is quick and responsive. A four-player multi-cart link-up mode is included too. We'll review it next month.







NGC MONKEY FUN!

Super Monkey Ball Junior is already out in the States, where Sega's stuff is published by THQ. Infogrames is the company handling things in this country. Interesting.

SUPER MONKEY BALL JUNIOR

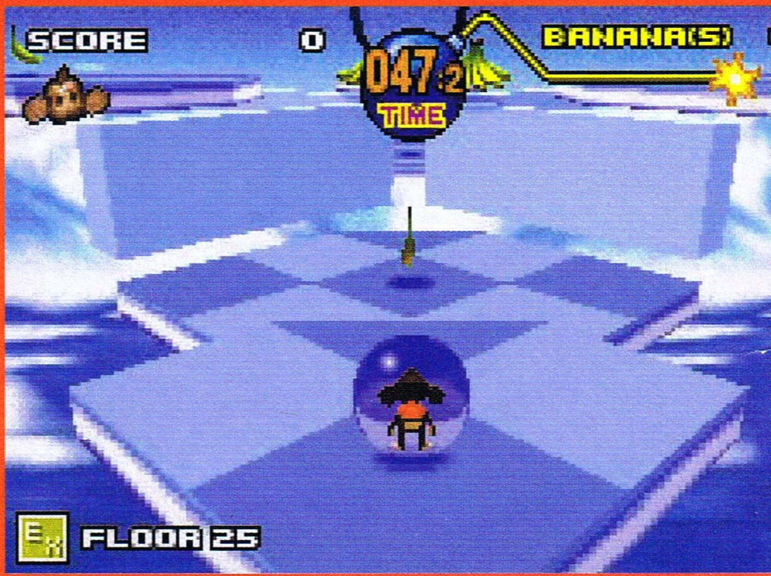
Take a portable banana break with Sega's perfectly formed miniature marvel.

Unbelievably, the British developers behind this ambitious conversion, Realism, have managed to produce a *Monkey Ball* that certainly isn't disgraced by comparisons to the Gamecube original.

It's incredibly close to the first *Super Monkey Ball*, featuring 60 of the original levels (some of the more graphically complicated ones were omitted). The Monkey Fight, Target, Bowling and Golf mini-games have also survived intact, along with the music, sound effects and menu screens from the Gamecube.

And there's even a brand new GBA-only mode called Monkey Duel, in which two players can race through any of the standard solo levels.

We'll have a review next month, when we'll find out just how the D-pad control compares to the Gamecube's analogue. (Actually pretty favourably, as early impressions would have it...)




NEXT GENERATION GOLF
OUTLAW GOLF
GREAT GOLF, BAD ATTITUDE
SIMON & SCHUSTER INTERACTIVE
A VIACOM COMPANY
XBOX
NINTENDO GAMECUBE
HYPNOTIX
TDK mediactive
WWW.TDK-MEDIACTIVE.COM
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P.N. 03

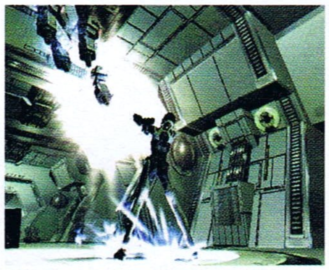
Ultra-stylish machine war…

Along with *Viewtiful Joe* it was easy to ascertain what this game might involve looking like – a much prettier (and that's really saying something) take on Treasure's *Sin and Punishment*.

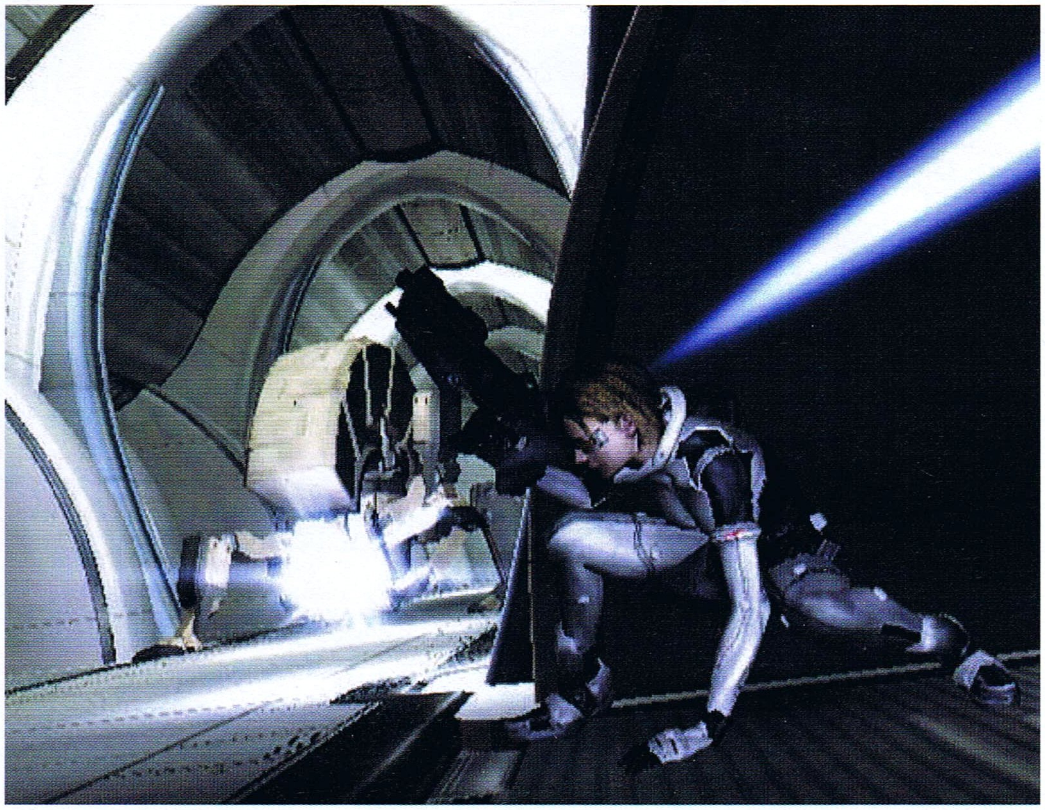
The action sequences that resemble gameplay footage show the hero jumping from side to side and crouching behind walls, avoiding and returning gunfire from the highly impressive mechs that attack her. This all suggests that *P.N. 03* will have arcade sensibilities at its heart – with an emphasis on super-sharp reflexes and plenty of stamina in your trigger finger. The main reasons for this theory? Well, video footage aside, Capcom have stressed that they're using smaller development teams. With the current visual intensity, it's doubtful they can utilise this without sacrificing some player freedom… time will, as they say, tell.



△ These desert-based sections really show off Gamecube's particle effects.



△ You gotta love those clinical visuals.



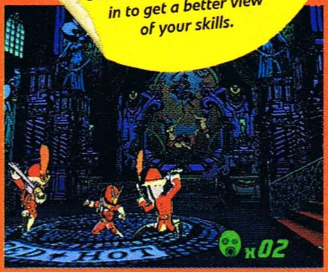


VIEWTIFUL JOE

Insane name, mad comic-book game.

NGC VIEW TO A SKILL!

The effects are truly, er, viewtiful. You can slow down the action bullet-time style, and zoom in to get a better view of your skills.





Again, Capcom have set tongues wagging over another stylised offering. It's a shame that stills don't do the game justice – to see it moving is to understand its charm. *Viewtiful Joe* is essentially a 2D side-scrolling fighter, but with more twists than you could possibly imagine. While fighting hordes of freaky-looking enemies, Joe can utilise the scenery to his advantage, and use special powers such as speed-up and slow-down to enhance his abilities and avoid any incoming threats.

Expect the game to feature simplistic arcade-style action with an emphasis on show-boating with your fighting skills in order to increase your powers. Capcom know what they're doing with this kind of stuff. We expect greatness.



DEAD PHOENIX





The weakest-looking of all of the new Capcom titles, *Dead Phoenix* isn't as stylised or as striking as the other games, and there are worrying levels of fogging in the surrounding environments. Even so, you can't fail to be impressed by the sheer size of some of the creatures on show. Moreover, the ability to spawn whole armies on the ground to combat them, via a handy arm-mounted magic orb, promises to open up some intriguing gameplay opportunities.



KILLER 7



Nope. Still don't know what the gameplay will be like, but every time we run the footage someone in the office suffers a brain attack. Spooky, over-saturated cel-shaded cut-scenes displaying blood-splattered ultra-violence and vicious point-blank gunplay. We want it. We want it now.

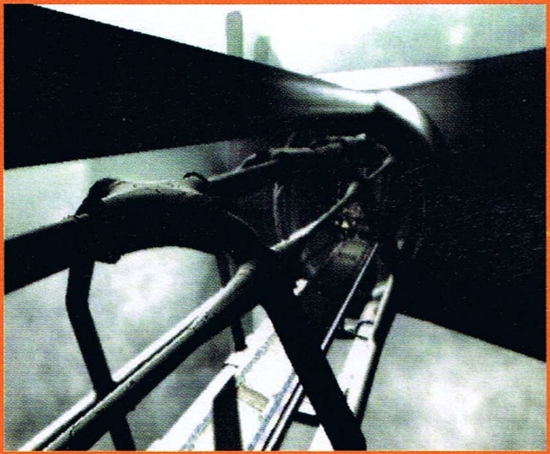
BIOHAZARD 4

The first fully-3D *Resi* adventure!



It's about time Capcom got their act together with this franchise. Okay, so *Code Veronica* was a little different to the strict pre-rendering of all the other games, but it didn't exactly look great. *Biohazard* will change all that. It looks almost as good as *Zero*, with the added bonus that the whole thing will be in true 3D. Which means that scenery will be properly interactive (like the gorgeous fluttering curtains in the footage), the camera will, potentially, be able to move freely around the environments, and – more importantly – the ancient, creaky control system that continues to plague the most recent iterations in the series will finally be rectified.

Plot-wise, major details are still thin on the ground – but it seems that Leon S Kennedy (pictured right) gets himself possessed by a nasty cloud of black gas. The gas' origins and purpose are not yet known, but we could hazard a guess. Unfortunately, the game is far from finished, with a release date set at some time in 2004.









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IN NEWS THIS MONTH





GBA ADVANCES

NINTENDO SURPRISES EVERYONE WITH A SLEEKER, SEXIER VERSION OF THE GBA... BY GERAINT EVANS

Just 18 months after its release, and near-constant moaning of the you-can't-see-the-damn-screen-half-the-time variety, Nintendo announced to the world that a successor to their six million-selling handheld would be making its way to gamers in just a couple of months. Brilliant news indeed, and a fantastic way to kick off 2003.

On 7th January, Nintendo invited us to a "very special" press event concerning the machine (the very same day as our deadline, incidentally, a fact which frustrated our desk-bound editor no end) – not that we knew GBA SP was on the cards. There was, however, the promise of an announcement that would make us "very happy" (and it has). But amid all the rumours of the 'megaton bombshell', developer buy-outs, Pokémon, and secret online plans it was difficult to know what to make of this rather low-key gathering of 40 or 50 people. Once again, David Gosen presided, and kicked off the proceedings with the usual robotic spiel that we've come to know and, er, 'love'. After a cheap dig at Nintendo's competitors – made even more bizarre by the nature of the main announcement – about how the 'panic' for lower pricing and the focus on new technology was no substitute for back-to-basics gameplay, Gosen went on to regurgitate the usual statistic reports (Christmas sales were notable by their absence), before moving on to 2003's game releases.

YOUR YEAR IN GAMES

This proved to be a little more interesting. *Zelda: Link to The Past* is due

STOP PRESS

ANIMAL CROSSING PAL RELEASE? At the GBA SP announcement, David Gosen said there were still no plans to announce a PAL Animal Crossing. Strange really, since a few weeks earlier, Nintendo of Europe's David Tomlinson (part of Nintendo's Quality Assurance testing team) was reported to have said that he was actually working on a PAL version of the game right now. Hmmm…

NEWSMAIDS... This month's bulging udder of news was milked by Farmers Bickham, Evans and Kitts. Pasteuriser General Daniel Geary was on hand to separate the creamy curds of untruth from the bitter whey of inaccuracy. Ooh-ARRR!

GBA SP HANDS ON

Even though it doesn't do a great deal that a normal GBA can't, other than light up and look cool, the SP's a quality piece of kit. The rounded case feels reassuringly chunky when folded, and when opened reveals the crispest display of any Game Boy model. The screen is exactly the same size as that on a standard GBA, but the addition of a built-in light (that can be turned off when not needed) makes everything crystal-clear.

The D-pad and buttons are excellent – there's very little travel on them, and a satisfying micro-switched click when they're pressed. The shoulder buttons are set into the corners of the unit, so the handling's almost exactly the same as it was with the old Game Boys. Didn't they abandon that shape because it was supposed to be uncomfortable?





△ Two ports – the link port and 'EXT 2', presumably for battery charging or suchlike.

on the 23rd of March. The new Pokémon games should reach us in time for the summer, while *Mario Advance 4* and (woo-hoo!) *Advance Wars 2* should be with us by the end of the year.

On the Gamecube front, the line-up for the start of the year will, again, be very strong. *Super Monkey Ball 2* hits in February, *Phantasy Star Online* will be released along with a modem in March, and *Metroid Prime* will drop jaws soon after. Then it's on to the divine *Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker*, with the intriguing looking *Wario World* bringing up the rear and leading us into the predictably slow summer.

The best of course, is yet to come, with the long awaited *Mario Kart* and the likes of *F-Zero*, *1080°* and *Pikmin 2* hitting in Q3 (or autumn, if you're not familiar with Americanised press-release lingo). Great stuff.

GOSEN'S POCKET

Despite all the crowing about the industry being about 'games not new technology' and all the 'let's get back to basics' nonsense, Gosen finally got around to letting us know exactly what he dragged us down to foggy London for. Nope, it wasn't another press release, it was – yes – some new technology (oh, the irony), in the shape of the superb Game Boy Advance SP.

Apparently, this is Nintendo's push to ensnare the older gamer. The average GBA player is around 16 years old. Nintendo wants to change that. They want to grow the market further, to entice new users and, more importantly, adult gamers who may never even have considered gaming before. It's safe to say Nintendo stand a very good chance of succeeding with the SP.

It's been in development as early as June 2000, and the 20-man team that designed it have arrived at something that can only be described as 'damn sexy'. Weighing in at a measly 143g, the GBA SP has exactly the same specs as a GBA (in terms of CPU speed, core functions and whatnot). Outwardly, everything has undergone a radical change. To start with, and perhaps most importantly, the screen now has it's own front-light so that it can be played in any conditions. Goodbye, Afterburner. It also folds in half, making screen protection much easier, while making the machine genuinely pocket-sized, along the same lines as a minidisc player This smaller size is due in part to the lithium-ion rechargable battery that does away with bulky batteries. Lasting about ten hours with the light on (and 18 hours off), the battery is screwed into the unit, which itself plugs into your wall to recharge like a mobile phone. Those worried that the unit may suffer mobile-phone style battery failure can be assured that replacement batteries will be available – although specific details will be released closer to the time.

"THE SCREEN NOW HAS ITS OWN FRONT-LIGHT SO IT CAN BE PLAYED IN ANY CONDITIONS..."



△ Welsh love-whale Geraint gets 'personal' with the SP. He's in lust.



△ The back of the SP. We can't wait to get one. Only two months to wait!

SP, PLEASE!

So, we suppose you're wondering when you can get your hands on it? Very soon is the answer. *Astonishingly* soon, in fact. The GBA SP will be available in the UK on the 28th of March. It will come in three colours (Silver, Black and Blue), and will be priced at around 129-39 Euros (about 80-90 quid). Of course, it'll also be fully compatible with all existing GBA games and backwards-compatible with old GBC and Game Boy games, just like the regular GBA.

And that as they say, was that. Shortly after, we were ushered out into the foyer so that we could sample the wondrous silver machine for ourselves. For more details about the unit itself, check out the hands-on impressions boxout above, complete with hand-modelling by our own Mr Evans. And get very excited indeed…

SHORT CUTS





ADVANCE WARS GETS A SEQUEL

It doesn't seem that long ago that *Advance Wars* looked like never hitting our shores. The day it did was a joyous one indeed, for it was – and still is, to this day – the *best* GBA game ever made. Developers Intelligent Systems' strategy masterpiece is now set to get a second instalment, to be released this autumn. All we have to go on so far is this limited selection of teaser shots, but if you're anywhere near as a big a fan of the games as we are then they should excite you nonetheless.

Visually speaking, the game looks very much as it always did (which is no bad thing). The main differences we've noticed are the inclusion of the new legged tank-units and the smart inclusion of static units (well, buildings) that have the ability to fire at you in self-defence. Hopefully, *Advance Wars 2* will feature even bigger maps, new forms of terrain and, hopefully, the ability to adapt in-game rules for a more varied multiplayer experience. Needless to say, we'll be keeping a very close, very beady eye on this one up until its release.

VIOLENCE OUT
Honduras (in Central America) is the latest country to ban violent games. The bill, passed in the Honduran Congress, will come into effect next June. Games to be ushered out to help quash rising crime in the country are Resident Evil, Turok Evolution, Mortal Kombat, Street Fighter, and Rare's Perfect Dark. Once retailers sell their existing stock that'll be it…

SEGA TAKE GC ONLINE
Despite Gamecube getting online in a few months time, Nintendo themselves won't be creating the infastructure. That task will fall to PSO developers Sega…

"That snot-dribbling kid slurps it 90 per cent of the way up"

DISAGREE WITH MOST WANTED? Then email us at **ngc@futurenet.co.uk** or write to us at **NGC**, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW and tell us the three games you're most looking forward to. Every month, we'll tally up the scores on the doors and change the list accordingly.

MOST WANTED!

The 25 games you've been eagerly rubbing your thighs for over the last 30 days...



THIS MONTH

Very little movement on the charts right now, maybe thanks to most sensible folk having more important things to worry about, such as how to dispose of the body in the spare bedroom following that little mishap at the New Year party. Why not take a break with our fabulous *Metroid* poster magazine this month? You deserve it.



1 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

UK MAY | US MARCH | JAPAN NOW

A thing of beauty, for sure. There's no other game we can recall that depicts dangling nasal effluvia with such tremendous realism. The way that snot-dribbling kid slurps it 90 per cent of the way up into his sinus cavity, before running out of suction and letting it bounce back down towards his chin... It's like living, breathing jelly.



2 METROID PRIME

UK MARCH | US NOW | JAPAN NOW

After an unprecedented burst of seasonal activity from Nintendo of Iraq saw a swift Middle East conversion of the game, complete with a redesigned, burqa-wearing Samus, UK gamers really are the last people in the world to get hold of *Metroid Prime*. 21st March. Mark it in your diary.



3 MARIO KART GC

UK 2003 | US 2003 | JAPAN 2003

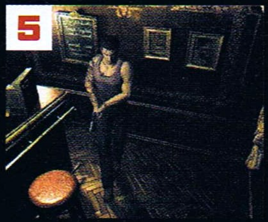
It's actually on the release schedule! After hearing no mention of this title since that brief glimpse on the same demo showreel that featured the never-to-be-seen-on-Gamecube Joanna Dark, we were beginning to doubt whether *Mario Kart* really existed. But it does. It's listed as "Q3/Q4".



4 F-ZERO GC

UK 2003 | US 2003 | JAPAN MAY

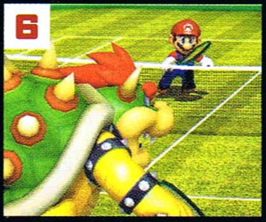
If you're feeling the need for speed (and we're talking in a Tom Cruise sense here, not the trundling EA sports car game), look no further. We've no doubt that Sega's supersonic interpretation of the classic N64 hover-racer is going to be the business on Gamecube and in the arcades.



5 RESIDENT EVIL ZERO

UK MARCH | US NOW | JAPAN NOW

Not much longer to wait for the next instalment of the classic survival horror series, which import gamers should already be very familiar with. It's lovely stuff, you know, and despite the rusty old control system, still probably the only game series that can induce genuine horror-movie shocks.



6 MARIO TENNIS

UK 2003 | US 2003 | JAPAN WINTER

The outstanding N64 version somehow managed to be the most playable, skilful tennis game we've ever seen, despite using just two buttons for a control system that left the technical basics entirely up to the computer. We expect to see this one before the end of the year, all over the world.



7 ANIMAL CROSSING

UK TBA | US NOW | JAPAN NOW

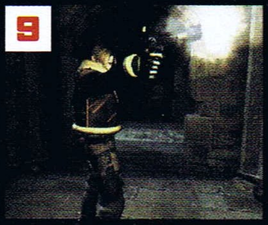
Make friends with the dangerous Wart Jr, design bandanas of dubious moral character, and hack down your friend's fruit trees for profit. Alternatively, trade items nicely, leave buried treasure for other members of your family to find, and become a model animal citizen.



8 1080°: AVALANCHE

UK 2003 | US 2003 | JAPAN 2003

Thank goodness they didn't call it *White Storm*, to follow *Wave Race: Blue Storm*. Then we would have had the horrifying prospect of a future *Excitebike* update being called *Brown Storm*, which really doesn't bear thinking about. *1080°: Avalanche* avoids setting a precedent of badness.



9 RESIDENT EVIL 4

UK TBA | US TBA | JAPAN TBA

Straight in with a bullet, is what they might say if this was another Robbie Williams karaoke hit cruising up the US hot 100 on its way to an extended stay at Topofthechartsville, Alabama. But it's actually another *Resident Evil* game, with zombies and stuff, so that phrase is not applicable.

#	Game	Description	UK	US	JAPAN
10	FINAL FANTASY	The chronicle of the old crystals.	TBA	TBA	SPRING
11	STARFOX ARMADA	Namco's Foxy arcade shooter.	2003	2003	2003
12	VIEWTIFUL JOE	Veeee-*yoo*-ti-ful Joe!	Q2 2003	2003	2003
13	MARIO GOLF	Mazza gets serious with a 9-iron.	2003	2003	SUMMER
14	KILLER 7	Stylised guns and anime action.	Q4 2003	2003	2003
15	HARVEST MOON	Mmmm, Harvesty.	TBA	SPRING	DEC
16	P.N. 03	Capcom's sci-fi shooter.	Q2 2003	2003	2003
17	RAYMAN 3	No arms, plenty of platforms.	FEB 21	MARCH	TBA
18	XIII	Cel-shaded first-person shooter.	2003	2003	TBA
19	ONIMUSHA 3	*Resident Evil* in feudal Japan.	TBA	TBA	TBA
20	DRIVER 3	Top-secret car theft and crime.	2003	2003	TBA
21	PRO EVO SOCCER 2	FIFA-thumping Konami footie sim.	TBA	TBA	2003
22	BROKEN SWORD 3	Adventure and intrigue. Yep.	2003	2003	2003
23	CONFLICT: DESERT STORM	No risk of Gulf War syndrome.	2003	2003	TBA
24	DRAGON'S LAIR 3D	Long-awaited retro update.	MAY	NOW	TBA
25	PHANTASY STAR ONLINE	Online adventuring and chatting.	MARCH	NOW	NOW

WRITE TO... MAILBOX/NGC/30 MONMOUTH STREET/BATH/BA1 2BW OR EMAIL NGC@FUTURENET.CO.UK

DID YOU KNOW? Capcom's five forthcoming Gamecube titles, four of which (*Viewtiful Joe*, *Resident Evil 4*, *P.N. 03* and *Killer 7*) have crept into this month's Most Wanted list, fall under the Production Studio 4 banner, under the watchful eye of *Resident Evil* creator Shinji Mikami.



△ If it wasn't for the money *Pokémon* has raked in over the last eight years, we'd probably be playing *Mario Sunshine* and *Legend of Zelda* on an Xbox.

BIG IN JAPAN

Nintendo's big guns make the biggest noise in the 2002 end-of-year sales charts.

The end-of year sales figures from Japan showed a fairly respectable performance from Nintendo, with three Gamecube and three Game Boy Advance titles among the biggest 20 hits of the year.

While a senior Nintendo employee recently told us that the company's UK Christmas sales had been "not what we had hoped for", things are certainly more healthy in Japan.

The two GBA *Pokémon* games were comfortably the best-selling titles of 2002, selling almost 1.4m units each. It marks the eighth successive year that Pikachu and company have proved to be Nintendo's hottest property. The total of six spots in the top 20 makes Nintendo the most successful Japanese software publisher for the fifth year in a row.

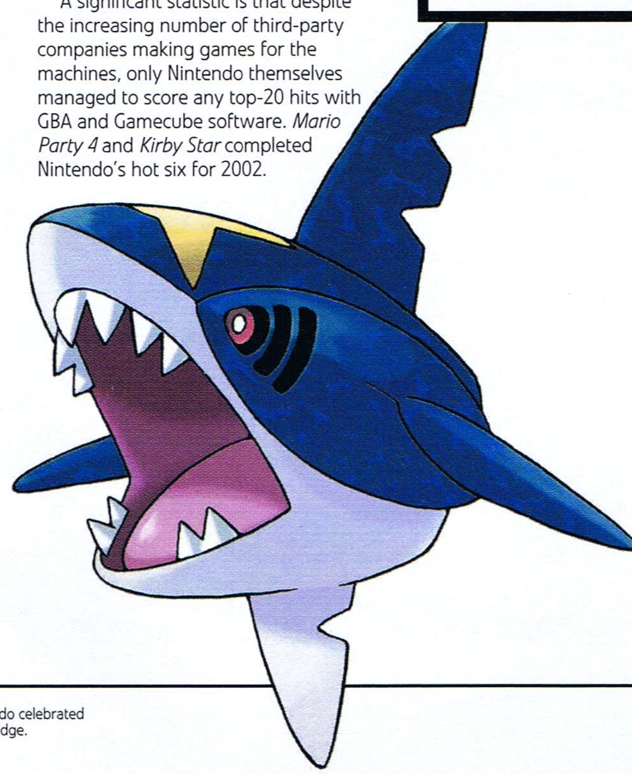
Take away *Pokémon*, of course, and it could have been a rather different story. The three Gamecube titles sold a combined total barely exceeding one of the two *Pokémon* games.

The best Gamecube performance came from the mighty *Legend of Zelda*, which managed to scrape in at number 19 with sales of just under 400,000, despite having been available for little over a week when the charts were compiled. The 655,000-selling *Super Mario Sunshine* might have shifted more copies since its release last summer, but its position at number eight is undoubtedly a sore disappointment for Nintendo's traditional mascot in his first ever Gamecube outing.

Nintendo hardware sales certainly picked up towards the end of the year. Although the PS2 (3.5m units) outsold Gamecube (1.1m) by better than three to one over the course of 2002, the gap between the two machines became much less significant during November and December, with Gamecube selling up to 90 per cent of the PS2's total. Microsoft's Xbox was barely in the running during 2002, with a little over 300,000 machines sold all year, and even major new Japanese-oriented releases such as *Panzer Dragoon Orta* struggling to sell more than 30,000 copies in total.

Game Boy Advance (3.1m) outsold all other machines in the run-up to the new year, thanks to *Pokémon*. At the time of writing, the two games had sold over four million copies, and more than doubled demand for the GBA.

A significant statistic is that despite the increasing number of third-party companies making games for the machines, only Nintendo themselves managed to score any top-20 hits with GBA and Gamecube software. *Mario Party 4* and *Kirby Star* completed Nintendo's hot six for 2002.



DID YOU KNOW? Back in 1995, Nintendo celebrated selling its one billionth videogame cartridge.

LAKITU'S LENS

YOSHI ON NEWSNIGHT? DONKEY KONG AS THE LONG-LOST SLATER SISTER IN 'ENDERS? LET LAKITU KNOW!





CHARMED I'M SURE

Tom Archer from Derby was watching Charmed on Channel 5 when he spotted the character Paige presenting "one of those computer game thingies" to a boy who has just set light to his parents. Apparently the "thingy", which turns out to be a GBA, is supposed to help control the boy's rage, allowing him to let off steam more safely, without requiring the use of matches.

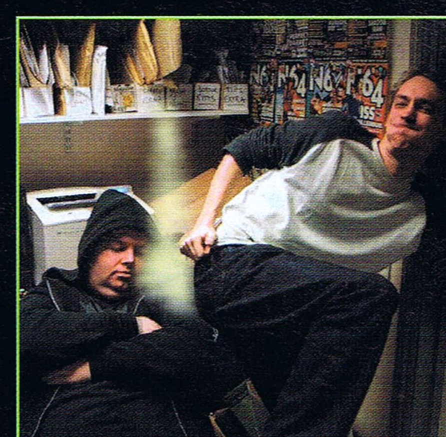
WRITE TO LAKITU'S LENS, NGC, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH, BA1 2BW

Entries sent with picture evidence will win a Gamecube game

VIRTUAL REALITY

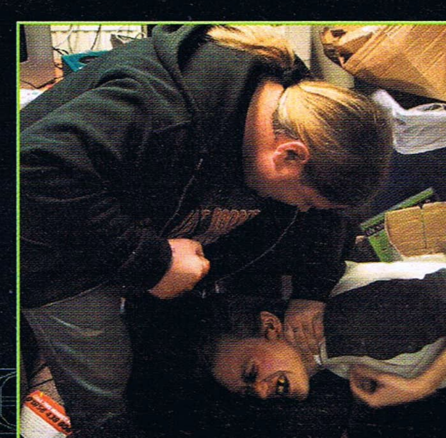
NINTENDO GAMING MOMENTS 'COME TRUE'.

THIS MONTH If Link can be a 'wind waker' then so can we...



THE TEST

After a potent Welsh lunch of pickled leeks, cabbage and Shreddies, Geraint finds a strange vagrant asleep under a pile of boxes in a quiet corner of the **NGC** office. Time to see if 'wind' really can 'wake'...



RESULT

Unfortunately our guest is a very light sleeper with a very short temper, and not entirely happy at waking to find the vapourised contents of Geraint's colon plastered inside his nostrils. Ambulance!

SHORT CUTS



YOU'VE ALL BEEN SO KIND

Hopefully as part of their new, improved commitment to providing Europe with better marketing (see this month's The Big Q for more on this), Nintendo of Europe have appointed Jim Merrick as their new Marketing and Networks Director. Responsible for all pan-European marketing activities, across 18 countries, Mr Merrick will basically coordinate every area of marketing strategies. Merrick has come over from Nintendo of America, where he was Network Marketing Director, and their Technical Director for six years prior to that. A man with many feathers to his cap, then. We were privileged enough to see Mr Merrick demonstrate GBA at ECTS a couple of years back. He wore a very nice jumper.

SIM CARD

Although it has yet to be officially announced, it transpires that ESRB (who certificate games content) have allegedly been testing a Gamecube version of PC smash-hit *The Sims*. Word of *Red Faction 2*'s defection to Gamecube was initially spread from a rating posted on ESRB's website, so hopefully this is indeed indicative of a future release for the virtual-life simulation. Kittsy can't wait to kill everyone in the game. He's a sociopath, but an endearing one.

FOUR-WAY FANTASY

More solid details emerge about Square's long awaited RPG…

It's always got something to do with some freaky magic stone, hasn't it? Magic stones, chuffin' crystals or some far-flung mystical piece of rock that needs to be retrieved to beat some rising tide of darkness. *Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles* will be no exception, but it's not quite as clichéd as it all sounds…

From what we can tell, the plot is thus: In the ancient past, the world was wrapped in a darkness. And once living things were touched by it, that life was lost forever. So, special crystals were used to push back the darkness. The bigger the crystal, the bigger the 'bubble' of safety. But these crystals do not last forever. To maintain their power, they need to be purified by the Water of Mana – a task undertaken by one young man from each village each year.

As (bad) luck would have it, this Water of Mana is pretty rare stuff. Rare insofar as the closest source to the hero of the game's village is a good hardy stomp away (over some mountains and God knows what else, probably) and surprise surprise, the hero is his village's water boy of the year.

As for gameplay, as Nintendo and Square promised, this is unlike any *Final Fantasy* so far. Aesthetically speaking, the fantasy theme does hark back to *FF*'s earlier incarnations (with a hint of *Secret of Mana* and a touch of Game Arts' *Grandia* for good measure) but in terms of what you actually *play*, the experience is something very different.

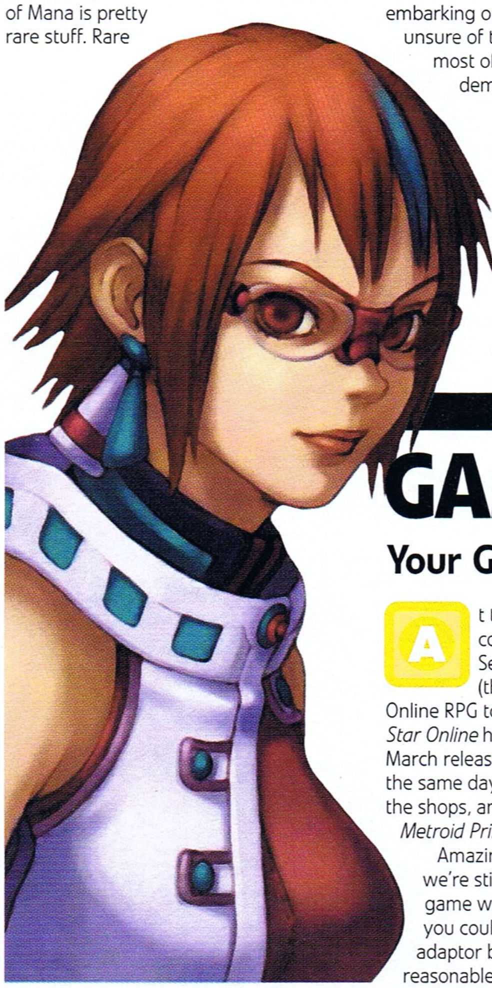
FILIAL FANTASY

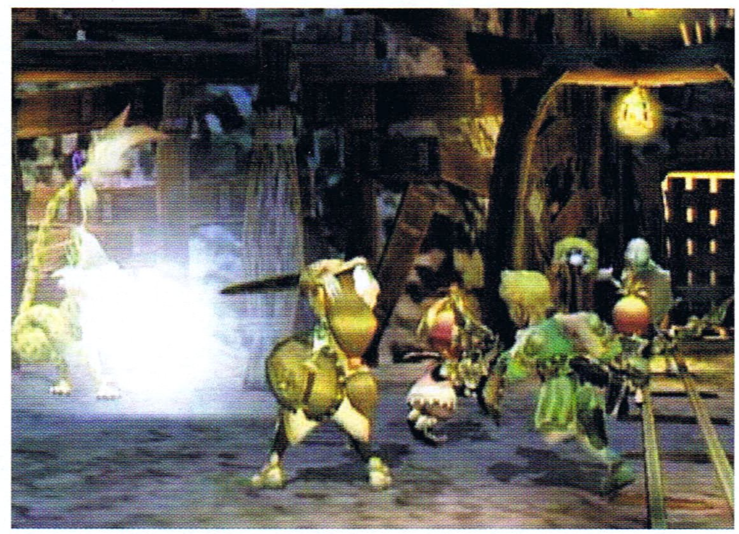
Crystal Chronicles' emphasis is very much on multiplayer adventuring. you select your character's class from one of four (Human, Armoured Warrior-type and Animal to describe but three) before embarking on your quest. As yet, we're unsure of the exact game structure, as most of what we've seen has been demonstrating battles.

But these are intriguing enough, requiring you and your friends to team up to vanquish foes. While they can be dealt with solo, you can play off one another to improve your chances. One player can cast magic from afar to back up anyone engaging in melee combat, for instance. With expert cooperation and timing, more devastating attacks can be pulled off. Moreover, using magic in conjunction with other players' castings can reap even greater rewards with spectacular results. The exact nature of how magic is cast is as yet unknown. From what we've seen, throwable purple orbs which spring from defeated foes seem to have magical properties. Whether or not individual characters have any extra magical skills remains to be seen.

Apart from wandering around the landscapes, we saw little evidence of towns and villages. We hope *FF:CC* is little more than a variation of *PSO*'s hack-and-slash-heavy gameplay. It would be nice to have a deeply involving story to get into as well as plenty of levelling up to flesh out the action.

We'll bring you more as we have it – but despite the tried-and-tested nature of *FF:CC*'s gameplay, and its deviation from the template of latter *FF*s, it's looking right gorgeous and no mistake.





△ Ah, the chronicles of crystal. We've waited long enough for a *FF* game, eh? Yes.

GAMECUBE GETS CONNECTED!

Your Gamecube will be getting online sooner than you think…

At the time of writing, it has come to our attention that Sega's superb MMORPG (that's Massively Multi-Player Online RPG to you and me) *Phantasy Star Online* has been slated for a 7th March release on these shores. That's the same day that *Resident Evil Zero* hits the shops, and a mere two weeks before *Metroid Prime* is unleashed.

Amazing news, eh? However, we're still unsure exactly how the game will be packaged. In Japan, you could buy the 56K modem adaptor bundled with the game for a reasonable price. UK publishers Infogrames, however, couldn't tell us anything regarding a similar deal. But – a-ha! – Nintendo have confirmed that both the modem and broadband adaptors *will* be available in some capacity when the game launches. Brilliant news indeed! Even more so when you consider that this means Gamecube will be going online before Xbox – the much-trumpeted Xbox Live goes, er, live a week or two later. Expect a PAL review next month!



△ *Phantasy Star Online* is the dog's patellas. Word.

UGA GO! Sega developers United Game Artists are currently at work on a brand-new, as-yet unnamed game for Gamecube. The codeshop was behind the PS2 game Rez, which was almost universally hailed as a sublime piece of gaming, despite being pretentiously described as – get this – 'synaesthesia'. Some people, eh?

A GAME OF RIDGE The as-yet untitled new Ridge Racer game, which is heading slowly towards a March 2004 release date, will apparently feature actual, licensed cars. This is officially the most exciting news page ever made.

HAVE NINTENDO FINALLY MANAGED TO GET THEIR PAL RELEASE DATES RIGHT?

Well, in the sense of European releases stretching months behind their US and Japanese equivalents, manifestly not – *Zelda*, for instance, has just been confirmed for a 3rd May release, a full five months after the Japanese unveiling, and *Metroid*'s 21st March UK release is almost four months after the US. But take a closer look, and giant strides are nonetheless being made – Nintendo at the start of 2003 is an entirely different proposition to the company that stumbled out of 2002 (Xbox sold around 38,000 units over the yuletide week, whereas the Cube hit a measly 15,000).

The 7th January press conference, where Game Boy Advance SP was unveiled, also broke more just-as-startling news, even if it was startling in a quieter manner. Namely, 2003's release schedule. It makes fascinating reading.



△ *Zelda: The Wind Waker*! An astonishing game, as you will see by reading our chunky ten-page review in this very issue. Flick to page 26 – after finishing this page, natch.



△ *F-Zero*. Faster than the speed of Mike.



△ He's caught a fairy. Cruel elf-boy.

THIRD-PARTY TIME

There's an overwhelming tide of third-party games, for starters, and a good amount of first-party exclusives too. Not only does March see *Phantasy Star Online, Resident Evil Zero and* the astonishing *Metroid Prime* assault our finances, there's a brief reprieve in April (aside from the excellent *Hitman 2* and *Conflict Desert Storm*) before *The Wind Waker* finally snatches the Best Game Ever crown from Samus Aran. Beyond that, there are five Capcom games to look forward to, plus a wealth of now-confirmed-for-the-UK-in-2003 Nintendo titles to eagerly await. And this is where things get interesting.

The third quarter of the year sees the following hit the UK: *F-Zero, Mario Golf, Mario Tennis, 1080°: Avalanche, Pikmin 2* …and *Mario Kart*. Yup, *Mario Kart*. Nothing has been seen of the title yet, not even in Japan – although it's alleged the game *will* be playable online – but here it is, in black and white, along with the sequel to the best garden-based game we've ever played. Great news.

> **"THE CRUX OF THE MATTER IS THAT THESE TITLES ARE DUE FOR RELEASE IN THE UK THIS YEAR..."**

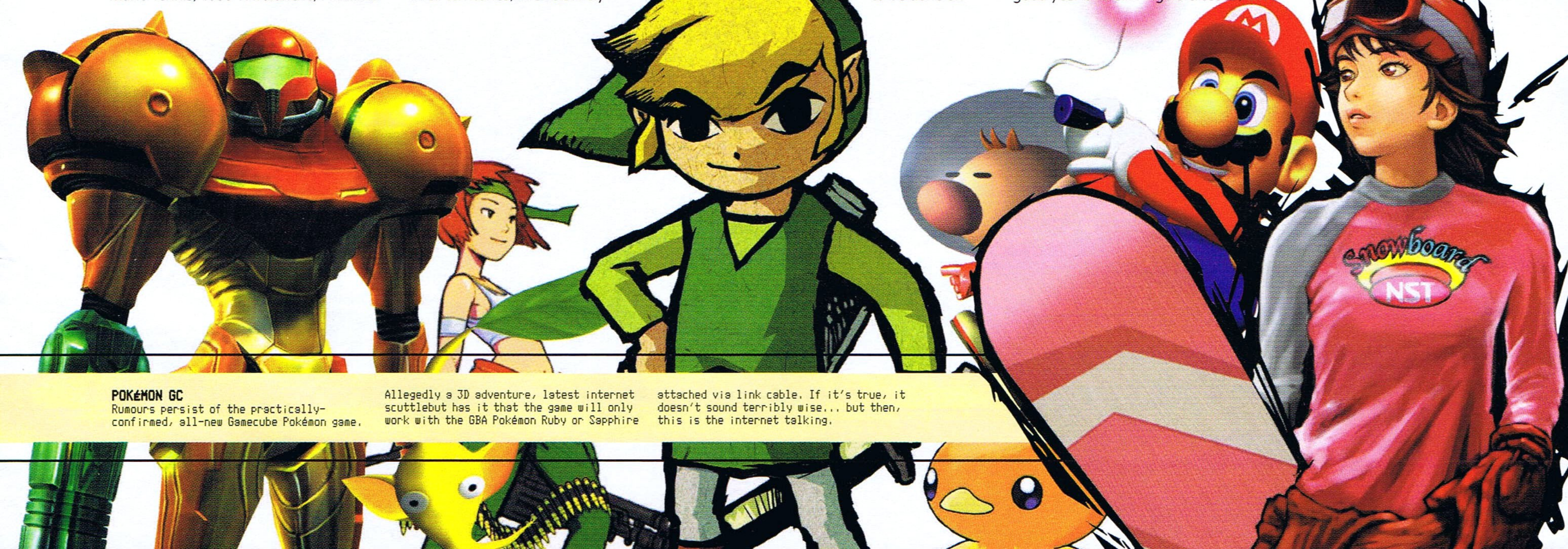
But the crux of the matter is that these titles are due in the UK *this year*, and they don't yet have concrete release dates in the US or Japan. What does this suggest, other than a concerted effort being made to get these games out in all territories, in a relatively short space of time? Of course, games slip – look at *Wario World*, due December 2002, now June – but Nintendo have made a habit of not showing anything of their own games until they're pretty much finished (*Pikmin* being a case in point, along with the Game Boy Advance SP – out in March, unbelievably). The fact that we haven't yet seen much, or indeed anything, on these games is not indicative of how early they are and how much work needs to be done on them, but rather that they'll appear, seemingly fully-formed, later in the year. Plus, there's inevitably going to be a slew of games we don't know about yet.

I AM NOT AN ANOMALY!

Also, with the newly-appointed Jim Merrick now coordinating European marketing (previously a bigwig in the American operation), there's every sign Nintendo are, finally and at long last, starting to take Europe seriously. Now, we say this constantly, but after Nintendo's fairly dismal UK Christmas and a few important releases falling too late into 2003 (*Metroid* should have been filling PAL gamers' stockings), we're hopeful that this year is going to be much better than the last – and when all's said and done, 2002 was a pretty good year overall. Fingers crossed, eh?

PAST TIMES

As a nation, we've long been used to being treated shabbily when it comes to releases lagging behind lucky US and Japanese gaming folk. Who can forget the agonising will-they-won't-they nine-month wait for the original *Smash Bros*? Or the similar yawning abyss of time and uncertainty that separated PAL gamers from the US release of the magnificent *Excitebike 64*? Even after the almost-simultaneous worldwide release of *Ocarina of Time, Majora's Mask* suffered an undignified pause as Nintendo got around to localising the title. Nothing, however, can quite compare to the unfortunate situation surrounding the original *1080°: Snowboarding* – Nintendo delayed the release of the game here until after the summer, as the game apparently 'wouldn't sell' when the 'sun was shining'. Punters immediately imported from (sunny) Australia, a PAL territory that had no such qualms. Tsk.



POKéMON GC
Rumours persist of the practically-confirmed, all-new Gamecube Pokémon game. Allegedly a 3D adventure, latest internet scuttlebut has it that the game will only work with the GBA Pokémon Ruby or Sapphire attached via link cable. If it's true, it doesn't sound terribly wise... but then, this is the internet talking.

OUR PROMISE

Our reviewers are the most talented and knowledgeable Nintendo fans in the business. We don't only play games at work – we play them at home too, just like you. We ensure that we've played games through to the end so that we can give you a proper verdict – and one that saves you from wasting money.

NGC THE VERDICT YOU DESERVE!

REVIEWS







ZELDA
THE WIND WAKER

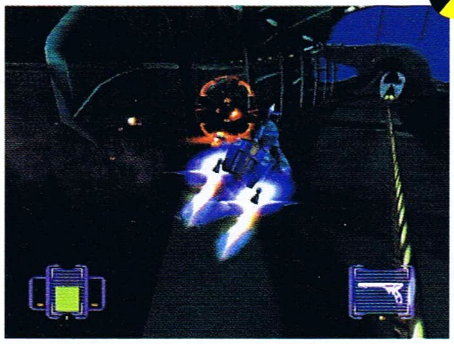
First *Metroid Prime*, now this… prepare to get your socks knocked off as Link returns – in style! **P26**

WARNING! SPOILERS AHOY! OUR REVIEWS CONTAIN SENSITIVE INFO!



MORTAL KOMBAT DEADLY ALLIANCE

The goriest fighting franchise ever made returns in new Gamecube-o-vision. If you like blood then, hey, you'll love this. LOVE IT. **P38**



STAR WARS BOUNTY HUNTER

Waddling pot-bellied bounty-hunter ahoy! Do the dance of the wobbling pistols with Jango himself. **P44**



ZELDA: LINK TO THE PAST

It's yet another of those pesky Best Games Ever, now returned to us in chipper handheld form. **P62**

IN REVIEWS THIS MONTH



ROBOTECH
GIANT TRANSFORMING ROBOTS BLOW THINGS TO BITS. YAHTZEE! **P48**



FIREBLADE
TAKE TO THE SKIES IN A 'CHOPPER'. IT AIN'T AIRWOLF. **P50**



WHAT IS PAL?

PAL is the UK's broadcasting standard. When you buy a Cube here it will be PAL. When you buy a Cube in the US or Japan it'll be NTSC – a different broadcasting standard, and the reason the two don't mix. Import games are NTSC games.

HOW IT WORKS...

Our reviews are the biggest, most comprehensive on Planet Earth. We devote more pages to the games you want to know about, and give you more detail than anyone else. And in the new **NGC** things have just got a whole lot better: our Field of Play and Event-o-meter regulars will pinpoint exactly when and where games get good, and yet our verdicts remain the most honest and most stringent around.



BLOOD OMEN 2

Ever fancied being a vampire and slathering your face in gushing man-claret? Your day has come. **P54**



CUBIVORE

We review the US version of the game of evolution-gone-mad. It's got meat-flaps, you know. Yes, We're not lying. **P64**

1 GET INTO THE GAME

The quickest and smartest way to get started...



2 FIELD OF PLAY

The game's best bit taken apart and analysed...



3 EVENT-O-METER

The good bits, the bad bits – all in a handy graph...



4 THE SCORE BAR

The verdict explained for you...

PROS AND CONS
Because we think it's important to provide you with balanced reviews, we'll sum up the game simply with plus and minus points.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...
Not all games are good (unsurprisingly) – so you'll be wanting to know what the alternative is. We'll provide suggestions here.

VISUALS AND SOUNDS
Gamecube sends PS2 packing. Do the visuals and sounds show this?

MASTERY
How well does the game make use of the Cube's startling hardware?

LIFESPAN
Will it last you a lifetime or a couple of minutes? Here you'll find out for sure...

VERDICT
We don't throw scores around – we give a game what it deserves. Here you will find the definitive verdict on whether you should purchase a game.

+

- Great.
- Super.
- Smashing. Really, really, really smashing. Really.

–

- Gnah.
- Gnurk...
- And, in all probability, harrumph. It just won't do.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...
Pikmin
Nintendo
NGC/69 85%
Magnificent garden-based strategy. Jolly nice indeed.



10 VISUALS
Looks utterly lovely, in a virtual space-world kind of way. We live in the future!

10 SOUNDS
Like having your ears gently covered in molten gold that doesn't horribly disfigure you.

10 MASTERY
Makes the Gamecube whirr and ping like that computer out of Colossus: The Forbin Project.

10 LIFESPAN
Will physically lock you in a room and tether you to your telly. Unpleasantly addictive.

VERDICT
A lovely game with some utterly lovely bits, which are only spoilt by the not-so-lovely bits. Still, it's better than plucking chickens for a living, eh? Right. Yes. Um.

NGC 85

5 OUR SCORING SYSTEM

What those scores mean to you...

NGC STAR GAME

0-24	25-49	50-74	75-89	90+
Crushingly awful, massively dull. Rest assured, this is crud.	Disappointing, stashed with faults and likely to be short of any quality.	Some great bits, some not-so-great bits. Decent but definitely problems.	Great fun, brilliantly programmed at times, but probably flawed.	Rarely awarded, you'll know a 90+ is absolutely essential.

Meat wizard: The hands of Mr Bickham

MEET THE NGC TEAM

A brand-new *Zelda* game? Hurrah! The team were even more excited than usual this month...



JES
"Ah, The Wind Waker. How apt". Jes' new diet of sprouts and All-Bran has made the office a less inviting place this month.



JUD
The Webbster couldn't care less for Zelda, the philistine. "Not enough tank", he murmured, stroking the barrel of an MG42.



DAN
"More Guinness, please. Hic."



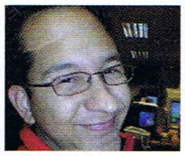
PAUL
Famed pig-farmer Paul couldn't be distracted long enough from his porcine money-pit to care about Zelda.



KITTSY
"There's nothing better than the grate of knife against bone", whispered a steely-eyed Martin. "Except a cheese sandwich".



GERAINT
"Zelda makes me feel like Tom Jones in a bath full of creamed leeks, having his feet massaged by Shirley Bassey. Boyo."



JALIM
Three-inch tall Steve made a surprise visit this month. "I'm back!", he cried. "Hello? Anyone? Can you hear me?"



MAYO
Barely capable of rational speech – or indeed, thought – Tom signalled his enthusiasm thusly: "Graaaarrrrgh!". Aaah.



ZY
Flame-haired word-man Nicholson stepped out of retirement to review Zelda for us, then promptly disappeared. Bless.

"This is likely to be the defining chapter in Gamecube's history"

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA THE WIND WAKER



Success or cel-out? Nintendo's latest bundle of elf, wealth and happiness – reviewed at last.

INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	NINTENDO
PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
PLAYERS	1
MEMORY CARD PAGES	12
GBA LINK-UP	YES
WIDESCREEN	YES
SURROUND SOUND	NO

WHEN'S IT OUT?
Out as you read this in Japan – March in the States, and 3rd May for Euro-plebs.



COST: ¥6,000 (about £30)

NGC STAR GAME

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER

The mean, green mowing machine returns…



HEALTH

Looking for hearts is as easy as cutting grass or breaking crockery. Although the contents are 'random', the game often gives you exactly what you need when you most need it. Be swift, though: goodies vanish a little too quickly.

ITEMS

You can assign three items to the X, Y and Z-buttons via the slightly clunky menu. It's useful to have set places for your gear (Z works best with items that toggle on and off, for example). Frantic situations call for multiple item usage…



MAP

The map (accessed with the D-pad) is more important than ever, as you must navigate by compass and wind direction. You'll also be collecting maps of secret locations and sunken treasure. In dungeons, look for rooms and chests with the Dungeon Compass.



LOCK-ON

Yellow arrows indicate interactive elements, be they switches, talkative peasants or monsters looking for trouble. A red arrow indicates a successful lock-on with the L-button, opening up new options for sword and shield use.

GET INTO THE GAME

Give Link a kick to wake his lazy arse up, then start him on this lot…

GRANNY NOTE

It all begins with a message from your sister to go see granny, but you can start exploring your home island after this. Everyone you meet can give you advice on controls (the front end is almost identical to Starfox). Use your sister's telescope to get the story rolling, and then work on some fighting techniques with the old master in the dojo to earn your sword. Finally, don't miss Terry's Shop, moored alongside the jetty, if you want to try out some truly mind-altering substances…



Steady now. Grab a handrail or ready a cushion. After all, this is only likely to be THE defining chapter in the history of the Gamecube. So it's only fair to warn you from the outset that we've been bravely tackling the Japanese release of the game as soon as we could lay our gaijin mitts on an import, and if you want a more accurate score that takes into account the storyline and the translation then you'll have to hold on a little longer. Our limited grasp of the language saw us through certain puzzles but not others, and the sheer amount of text in the game makes it certain that we'll need to reassess in due course.

Furthermore, the joy of exploration and discovery is so central to the *Zelda* experience that we're going to attempt to make this as spoiler-free as possible. Not easy, when our first instinct is to print massive screenshots of daunting boss battles and scream "Would you look at *that*!", but we'll try to restrain ourselves.

In fact, there was a great temptation not to talk about Those Graphics at all within the course of this review. The debate's been done to death, and you're either keeping an open mind or you're one of those kids who makes the internet a breeding ground for misanthropy. Get over it.

Viewed first-hand, what's remarkable is that the heavy stylisation feels comfortably like a natural progression of videogame visuals towards true animation. The palette and shading is actually reminiscent of classic early-Disney output, but with a recognisably Japanese imprint, a touch of *ukiyo-e* art and folklore references galore (anime fans might

DID YOU KNOW? Director on this instalment was Eiji Aonuma, who's also worked with Miyamoto on *Ocarina of Time* and was the driving force behind *Majora's Mask*.

"Every room is usually a game, a battle, or a problem to overcome"

GIVE 'EM ENOUGH ROPE

A variation of the tried, tested, and trusty Hookshot, this particular item is brilliant fun. Don't worry, you get swinging lessons near the start of the game…



CONFUSION!

No way across, and no obvious switches to activate a bridge. Ain't that just the way? Sheesh. This is going to call on a very early item and the ability to think in three dimensions. Get that brain working!



OBSERVATION!

A quick survey of the ceiling with the aforementioned early special item and, yep, that's what we wanted to see – a handy pipe-branch thingy ripe for, well… grappling. Go, go, grappling hook! Boo-yah, etc.



APPLICATION!

This might look like an intrusive use of game-engine cut-scenes, as it happens every time you use the grapple, but it's over in a second and gives a peculiar sense of satisfaction. It's wonderfully cinematic.



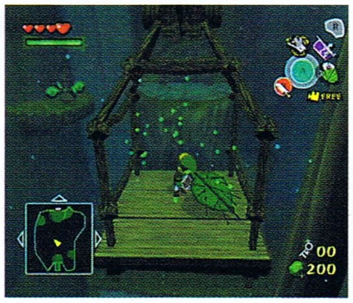
SUCCESS!

Like riding a swing, you can push back and forth on the stick to increase momentum. Best not to look down, though…



ZELDA'S BIGGEST FAN

While many items will be familiar, the greatest innovation in *Wind Waker* is the Deku Leaf, an oversized piece of foliage imbued with the same magical goodness of, er, vegetables.



WAFT IT!

Wave it like a fan to send a blast of air barrelling forward, enough to stun flying creatures or rotate windsails in a fashion that bears comparison with Super Mario Sunshine*'s water jet.*



CLUTCH IT!

Hold it when jumping from a platform and Link drops safely from great heights on his eco-chute. In this mode it quickly depletes your magic bar. Go on, guess what happens when the magic is exhausted.



SMOKE IT!

Actually, you can't do that. That would be silly. But no sillier than crossing deadly chasms on a giant salad ingredient, and if you try steering it you'll find you can partake in a spot of green hang-gliding.



FLY IT!

Outdoors, the leaf is at the mercy of the sea breeze and drops quickly. But wait – those swirling twisters bear a resemblance to the rising thermals seen in another Nintendo game…

SPUME RAIDER An opportunity for a spot



Racing across the ocean just before dawn, we're suddenly intrigued by what appear to be large masts looming on the horizon.



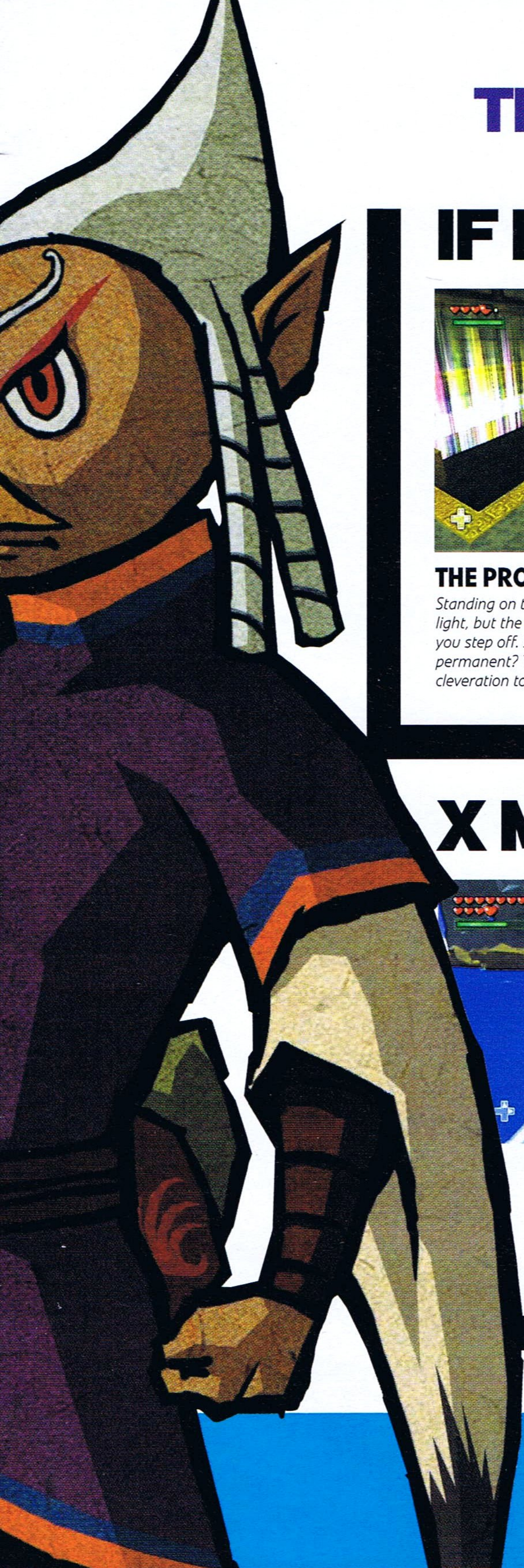
Equipping our Viewing Glass, we focus on the odd-looking shape. Not the crow's nest of a ship after all, but an ocean watchtower.



A little closer still and we see what we're up against. Moblins! Some on lookout, with a row of hefty cannons to boot.



Time to switch to our bombs and show a little buccaneering spirit in reply. They'll rue the day they crossed Cap'n, er, Knife-Ears. Yes.



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER

The mean, green mowing machine returns…

IF HYRULE'D THE WORLD

Puzzles are an integral part of the *Zelda* structure, and *Wind Waker* introduces a freaky new way to tackle them: with an out-of-body experience…



THE PROBLEM

Standing on this switch activates a bridge of light, but the crossing vanishes as soon as you step off. So, how to make it usefully permanent? There'll be some kind of brainial cleveration to beating this, no doubt…



THE SOLUTION

What we need is a constant weight. Yes, like that stone statue. Drawing his Wind Baton, Link tries conducting the tune he's just been taught. The statue changes from glowing blue to a revealing green.



TRANSFERENCE!

Transferring his mind to the statue, Link causes it to hop around under his will. As long as he remains deep in unbroken concentration, the joypad now controls the statue's movements.



SUCCESS! ER…

Ah, so the trick is to stand on the switch too! Excellent – now I can escape across the bridge, and on to freedom! Um, hang on. No, something's not quite right here. Let's think about this again…

X MARKS THE SPOT

We can only assume that a mistral regularly claims half the merchant navy in The *Wind Waker* archipelago, as the ocean floor is host to more sunken chests than a Beverly Hills retirement home. Rich pickings for a treasure hunter…



PIECES OF EIGHT

We're heading for that shaft of light erupting from the waves. We've come into possession of Treasure Map No 25, see, and it may lead to a heart piece.



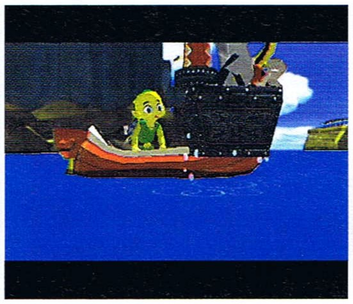
TREASURE ISLAND

The light vanishes as we draw near, but we won't need it. Comparing the treasure map (right) against our world map (left) identified the location of the island, and we can steer in by the cross. Easy, no?



DEAD MAN'S CHEST

When used in the boat, your grappling hook becomes a sturdy crane for finding and retrieving objects on the seabed. A shimmering sound indicates that we're in roughly the right spot.



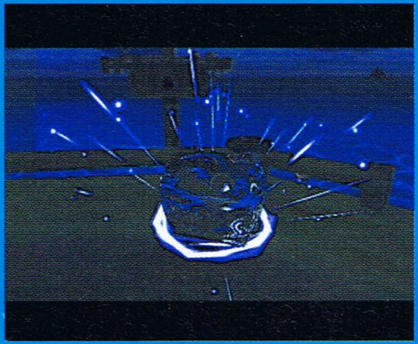
AAARRRR, JIM LAD! ETC…

There's a little bit of wriggling, which is worrying, but the claw has something heavy, and within moments a sturdy iron chest is breaking the waves. And inside… well, wouldn't you like to know?

of privateering on the high seas…



Once we've eradicated all of the cannons on one platform, a chest appears on the deck. Doubloons!



Daybreak illuminates the foam as we swim to the access ladder and prepare to become the most repellent boarder they'll ever know.



This moblin hasn't noticed us. His hatch, as they say, is about to be seriously battened by an improvised weapon, if you'll pardon the phrase.



Unfortunately for these scurvy dogs, their cannons are still aiming at us. Time to buckle their swash, loot the booty, and then it's elf overboard.

"The overworld is largely flat, and wet, and empty"



△ The Deku Tree returns, but with a seriously ugly skin condition: Chu Chu slimes.



△ Don't look down. Whatever you do, don't look down.



△ A highly pleasurable windmill ride on Taura Island, the only proper township you'll come across in *Wind Waker*. Well, apart from your home island, maybe. Hence, it's the hub in which side-stories and item sub-quests take place.



△ There's a disturbing hint of *kodama* tree spirit in the funny little Deku shoots.



△ Sword and shield get a real workout in *Wind Waker* – hold R whenever in doubt.



want to look out for Miyazaki influences sourced from My Neighbour Totoro and Princess Mononoke). Better still, all those curious details and architectural designs of the 2D *Zelda* titles, sorely missing on some of the N64's plainer textures, have been able to make their way back into the series on the Cube. There's as much humour as style in the imagery. To be honest, it's easy to forget the sheer dreaminess of your surroundings when you're deep in concentration – proof that it thankfully doesn't intrude on the playability whatsoever – but watch someone else play for a while and you'll start to spot all manner of breathtaking details, from the wobbling jowls of startled enemies to the play of flickering torchlight on a shield. So shove it, Don Bluth: *this* is the way to make an interactive cartoon. People have been trying for years, but it took Nintendo to

"THIS IS THE WAY TO MAKE AN INTERACTIVE CARTOON. PEOPLE HAVE TRIED FOR YEARS, BUT IT TOOK NINTENDO TO PULL IT OFF"

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER

The mean, green mowing machine returns…



△ When a talking frog on a cloud pulls alongside, best book some time off work.





△ How do you show 'wind'? With traditional animation tricks – dust, flags and trails.



△ Combat is not just great to look at and often frantic. It's also immensely satisfying.



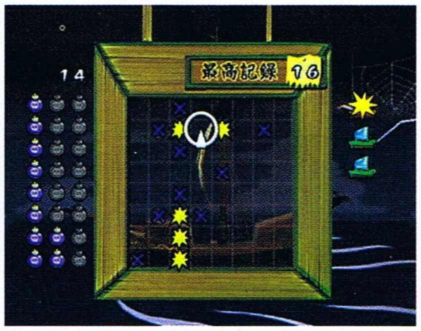
△ Watch out with those burning torches. Dungeons are full of flammable materials.

MINIGAME MADNESS

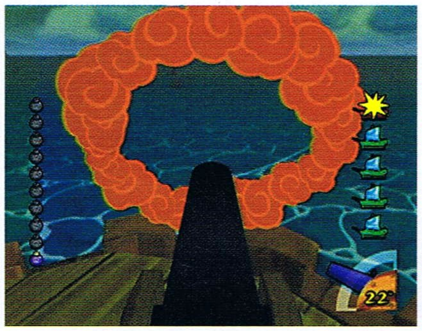
You're not that busy saving the world, then…



This dour-looking fellow is possibly our favourite character in the game. It's all about showmanship, see, and he's the, er, 'proprietor' of some of the sub-games you'll encounter…



First up, a simple version of Battleships. Which wouldn't be half as much fun without our showman's Banzai!-esque habit of calling hit and miss in his inimitable style. PLEASE don't drop it in translation.



This version of the old tank trajectory-shooting challenge shows another Pilotwings influence. Guess the right angle and try to blow up barrels in the sea with only a limited supply of cannonballs.



Successful wins add up to cash prizes. As expected, there's also the possibility of a special gift if you happen to do well on any of the challenges, but prepare to throw away lots of rupees…

finally pull it off. It also puts paid to the long-running argument that polygons just don't express fluid, organic animation as well as 2D sprites – we now have the technology, ladies and gentlemen, and it's already sitting under your TV, nonchalant as you like.

A SEA OF DISAPPOINTMENT

Before we go any further, though, let's scrape the most unpleasant business of the day from our boots. *WW* has its small share of disappointments to overcome, mostly by breaking with previous conventions, and the crux of the problem stems from the decision to set the game on the ocean. (Even though swimming sections have been dispensed with). There's a seafaring theme ahoy, me hearties, but it means that the overworld is largely flat, and wet, and empty. It lacks that tightly-packed cohesiveness of earlier *Zelda* titles, in which every bush and boulder was placed with deliberate intent and purpose, and every unreachable area tantalised with the prospect of yet more secrets to explore in the future. The islands are also rather small and sparsely scattered on a 7 x 7 grid, with miles of uneventful sailing in between. Even the acquisition of a warp ability isn't going to save you from cumulative hours of simply steering back and forth.

This wouldn't be so bad if the ocean combat demonstrated more care, but you have to wonder what was going through Nintendo's crystalline hive-mind when they implemented a system in which your jollyboat can't move and fight at the same time. It feels like a step backwards when you've galloped around *Ocarina of Time*, leaping fences and shooting from horseback. And



BOTTLED OFF

Fairies – more tangible than FreeLoader. Look, Link's even caught one in a bottle, and appears completely oblivious to the look of abject dismay on its fey little face. That's because he's an evil git, and will keep it trapped until its life force supplements his. Find all the bottles to hold more potions and, heh, fairies.



"By far the biggest fault with *WW* is that it has to end"

DITTY STICK

The Wind Baton is essentially a reinterpretation of the Ocarina, with similar special effects. Just wave that C-stick like you're one of those mad folk who stand at the front on Last Night Of The Proms to get themselves on the telly.

WAVE

Generously gauged to suit less musical players who aren't comfortable with all that rhythm-action precision, the baton merely asks you to be holding the C-stick in the right direction when the beat at the top passes the centre spot. Hit the right combination and Link's personal orchestra – presumably always following him around just off-camera – will play the tune.





WIND

The first thing you'll learn is how to control the direction of the wind. Hmm, now you're probably thinking it's not the most exciting element you could play with, and maybe the gods could have stretched to the odd fireball or tsunami. But this power is actually very useful when you find yourself sailing against a strong headwind, as well as coming in handy for several puzzles.

WARP

Scattered across the ocean are several well-placed whirlpools that will suck your little boat to various random locations. These vortices are the work of a rather mischievous fish-god, who also has a pretty natty line in cloud transportation. Discover his secret, though, and you can learn to play a tune that will help you cross the world in seconds, saving you a lengthy, tedious boat journey.





WHEN

The world of Wind Waker is subject to a day-night cycle while you're at sea, and there's nothing quite like drifting along in your jollyboat towards a glorious setting sun and watching the colours change. Two waves of the time tune and you can watch it all over again. Beautiful…





△ The avian folk of Dragon Mountain are, peculiarly, born to be postal workers. Poor bastards.



△ The infinitesimal chances of being hit by a meteor are of little consolation when it happens to YOU.



△ Your dragon boat can drift along on 'impulse power' if you hold the R-button, bearing you into places where the wind don't blow.

when you find yourself ignoring the booty left by monsters because of the hassle of collecting it at sea, it's obvious they didn't have the time to make this aspect of the game work as a replayable, enjoyable activity in itself.

> **THE CHANCES ARE YOU'LL KICK YOURSELF AFTER AN HOUR OF FAILING TO SEE A SOLUTION STARING YOU IN THE FACE**

Here's the good news, though. Those are our major criticisms. Yep, that's it. And now we can get on with explaining just why *WW* is still a must-have title, and why there is going to be bloodshed in the **NGC** office over who borrows it next.

In the numbering system of all good fairy tales, *WW* does three things very well. The first is its dungeon design, which carries the majority of the game. This is more like traditional *Zelda* fare, with plenty of platforming action and exploration. We could use terms like 'puzzles' and 'lateral thinking' but the connotations could make it

DID YOU KNOW? Shigeru Miyamoto: "It wasn't until we were able to harness the technology of the Gamecube that we were able to finally express wind." Well held.

NGC FIELD OF PLAY
The exploration and reward ethic of the *Zelda* series…





FLAMING HELL
Once on land, what really makes it work is that you're often set against the unknown and left to work things out for yourself. What's that odd feature over there? How can I open that door? Why can't I kill these – ouch! – accursed flappy things? There's always a clue to help you out but even that can be too subtle to spot at first…

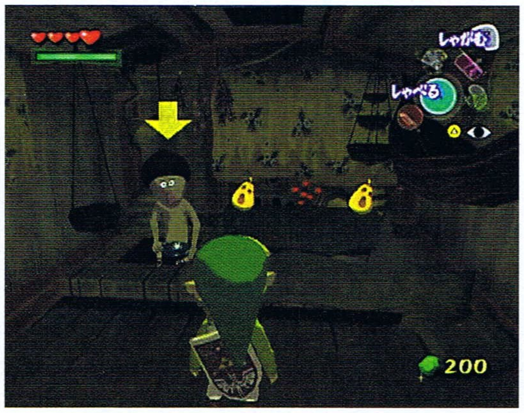


OCEANY HEAVEN
Take a long, hard look at this picture. Because you're going to be seeing it an awful lot when playing Wind Waker. This talking dragon-boat is both your guide and mode of transport, and you'll need to get your head around using wind (the yellow arrow) and compass bearings to steer him to dungeon isles, mapping the world as you go.

DAVY JONES' LOCKER
When you reach your prize, you know why it was all worthwhile. You may not even know what it will be, but that just makes it all the more exciting when you open the chest. A glimpse of something magical, that classic Zelda fanfare – and it's yours.



△ Wherever you look, these little gremlins always appear just off-camera with a squeak, pitchforks poised.



△ Terry runs a junk shop. That's the type of boat, not a comment on his lovely piyoi seeds.

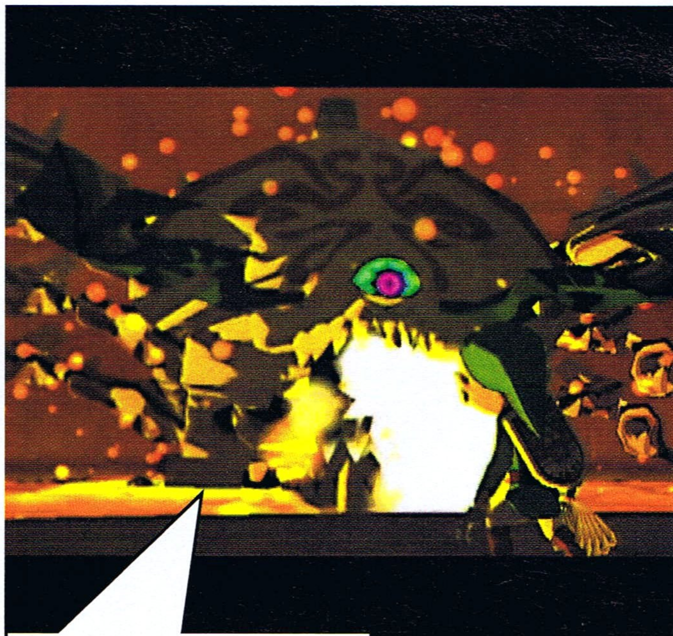
sound about as adrenaline-pumped as granny playing solitaire on a Sunday afternoon. Not so. As well as being eventful locations to investigate in their own right, every room is usually a game, a battle, or a problem to overcome, and the chances are you'll kick yourself after an hour of failing to see a solution staring you in the face. Oddly, that's when the sense of satisfaction is most intense, and some players (ahem) have been known to gesture rudely at the TV with a 'Yeesss…' in relief, even in front of bemused friends and partners. Or, er, so we hear.

MONSTER RUCKS
Just when you're getting desperate, though, you'll win a new item or toy to play with – a supply of bombs, perhaps – and then the fun kicks in again as you explore its potential and use it to unlock previous areas that had you flummoxed. (Or to put it another way: "Yay, now we can blow things up!"). Familiar play mechanics from Nintendo, but none the worse when implemented competently.

WW's second strength is its monster combat. The lock-on controls will be familiar to *OoT* and *Starfox* players, and there's a new counter-attack available when your sword flashes green, but it's the ability to use your other items as weapons that makes it more than a simple hack-'n'-slash affair. What's more, simply working out the best way to tackle each creature can be a puzzle in itself. Some have a very specific weakness to exploit, others carry weapons you can pick



ETERNAL HERO
Miyamoto has revised the story of Zelda to suggest that there are actually several Links, as the hero in green is reborn in different ages whenever the need to battle for the Triforce arises. Which is astoundingly handy when you want to keep making Zelda games, of course.



BIG BOSSES!
We don't want to give too much away, but the boss battles in The Wind Waker are hugely stunning set-pieces. You almost forgive them being a bit easy because you're enjoying them so much. Our favourite is on return to Monster Island, both a thrill to play and a thoroughly great cinematic experience in its own right. Oh, just you wait.

SENSEI WONDER

The path to true skill with the Master Sword requires an unorthodox training regime. Bathe in the wisdom of the ancients with renowned teacher, martial arts instructor and fish-gutting champion, Master Takahashi N Bromsgrove, MA. Listen and learn, callow youth!

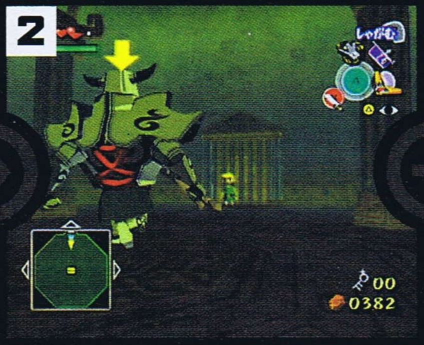


1



"Choose a worthy adversary. There is no honour in tackling a foe who clearly lacks your strength and skill. Ah, yes, good choice. Prepare your mind for the challenge ahead by repeating the mantra I have taught you – 'Toh, Shi. Toh, Shi. Toh, Shi.'"

2



"As your enemy closes in, you may feel the rush of warmth spreading from your *ki* areas to your gusset. Flow with it. Fix to the spot as if your body were made of stone. If you lack the confidence of the fight, your opponent will smell your fear."

3



"Use the environment to your advantage by turning it against the senses of your opponent – almost as if you were trying to hide behind parts of it. Is the rabbit who hides from the fox any less of a hunter? My teachings dispute this orthodoxy."

4



"The wise man sees the world is in flux, and your surroundings are as fickle as reeds in a summer breeze. See how your stratagem has succeeded: with your quarry suitably surprised, cease hyperventilating and strike like the manatee."

5



"Your opponent may engage in acts of bravado and self-glorification, usually characterised by shows of strength or expert swordsmanship. This is a clear sign of weakness. I do not advise my students to follow the path of self-indulgence."

6



"And now, I reveal to you the inner secret of my philosophy. When your opponent is distracted, your sword will ring out loud with the green glow of *ki*. This is the signal to roll round behind them and stab them in the back. Works every time."

7



"An honourable warrior always lets his challenger retrieve their weapon. So if they wrongly assumed you to be an honourable warrior, you'll have another chance to unroll the Cheating Rattlesnake manoeuvre."

8



"Hmm. Even without a weapon, it seems your nemesis is well-versed in hand-to-hand combat. And you have not yet subscribed to Stage 2 of my course on enlightened fighting mastery. So for now, I must leave you in the smoking wok of fate."

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER

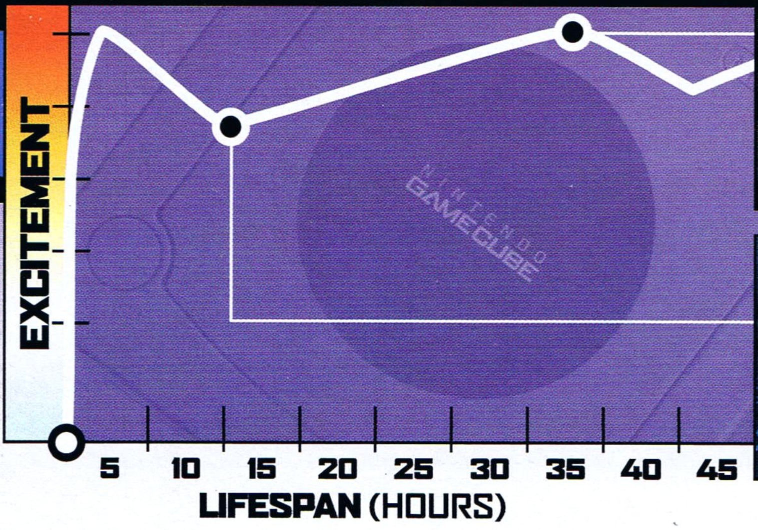
The mean, green mowing machine returns…

NGC EVENT-O-METER

The ebb and flow of life on the high seas…



You'll sit slack-jawed in front of the telly when you first switch the game on, and stay that way for the next 40 hours or so. And even if the legwork of plying the ocean can get less than scintillating, this new *Zelda* is nothing other than utterly delightful.





HIGH POINT
Just rewards
Cracking a puzzle. Winning new kit for your trouble. Using it to administer serious whuppage on formerly tough enemies.



LOW POINT
There and back again
Being sent back and forth across the ocean on no-fun chores to string out the lifespan of the game. Cheap!

+

- The visuals really work.
- Plentiful side-quests.
- Plenty of Gaming Moments.
- Please, don't end!

–

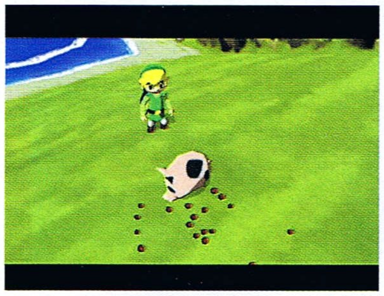
- Shallowest *Zelda* ever?
- Small dungeons.
- Too much sailing.
- Far too easy in parts.

IF YOU LIKE THIS…
Mario Sunshine
Nintendo
NGC/73 96%
Nintendo's other mascot in an equally astonishing game.

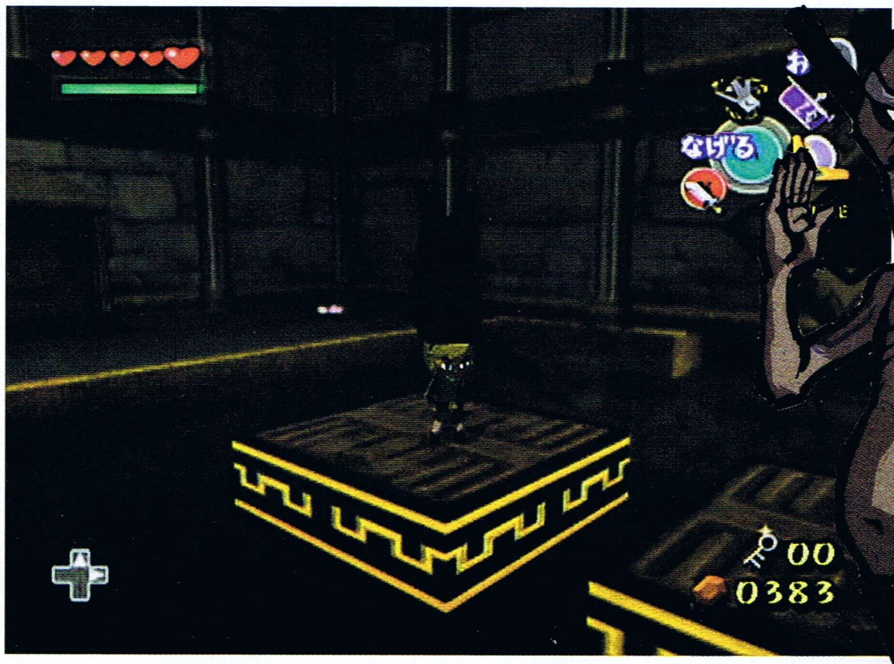




△ Moblins in small woods shouldn't swing big spears in company.



△ Link 'n' pork: look out for a strong pig-chasing element in *Wind Waker*.



△ If you've played a *Zelda* game before then expect to breeze through some of the familiar puzzles. Newcomers will probably enjoy it more than diehard fans.



up and wield against them. There's a lot more sword-fodder than ever to dispatch in *WW*, and the game isn't afraid to throw hordes of enemies at you from all angles simultaneously. Things can get confusing to the eye when the effects start flying, especially as the payoff for the surprisingly sturdy and glitch-free camera is a fairly conservative view of your surroundings, but it's good to find yourself alive and alone when the dust settles. If it's too easy, it's never less than fun.

Third, and most importantly, *WW* can boast a great deal of that special magic so often missing when rivals attempt to imitate Nintendo. Many of our favourite moments involve set-pieces and boss battles, and… oh, you'll just have to wait, but it's more than that. See, budding developers take note: collecting a static trail of coins is not fun. Never has been. Accidentally charging into a wall and dislodging a shelf, so the vase on top smashes on your head in a shower of coins? That's fun. Deftly plucking rupees from a distance with a boomerang before they can vanish? Now you're getting it. It's not always easy to put your finger on precisely what makes it all tick, but with a secret cave, a deft hint of music at the right times, an unexpected enemy at the wrong moment and a mystery gift in a treasure chest materialising at the end, it seems Nintendo has both the craft and the imagination to turn even a simple block-pushing challenge into a mini-adventure.

DO THE OCARINA

Were we to compare *WW* with *Ocarina of Time*, we'd be hard-pushed to choose a favourite right now. Even hazy memories of sunrise over Hyrule Field could tempt the diehards to think of *Wind Waker*'s breezy archipelago as small and lightweight by comparison. It's true, there aren't as many dungeons as we'd have liked – and those that exist aren't especially huge. But it's delivered so beautifully, with such practised polish, that it's going to be hard to return to playing something that looks and feels like… well, just a typical videogame.

By far the biggest fault with *WW* is that it has to end – see if you don't find yourself putting off the final boss for as long as possible by scouring the ocean for every last chest. This reminds us why we've continued to stick with Nintendo for most of our gaming lives. It's far too good for children.

ZY NICHOLSON



KNIGHTS OF OLD

Old Zelda titles, that is, as this encounter quite literally resurrects an enemy from past games. Except we still remember when the original Stalfos Knights were less colourful, and only had a few pixels, and were flat. Ah, videogames – possibly the only good thing about growing old is that they keep getting better.

10 VISUALS
A feast of style, served up with slopping flagons of humour.

7 SOUNDS
Welcome reworking of *Zelda* themes, and subtle use of excellent FX.

10 MASTERY
You've never seen anything like it outside of a cinema.

8 LIFESPAN
Over 40 hours for thorough players, but cynically stretched out.

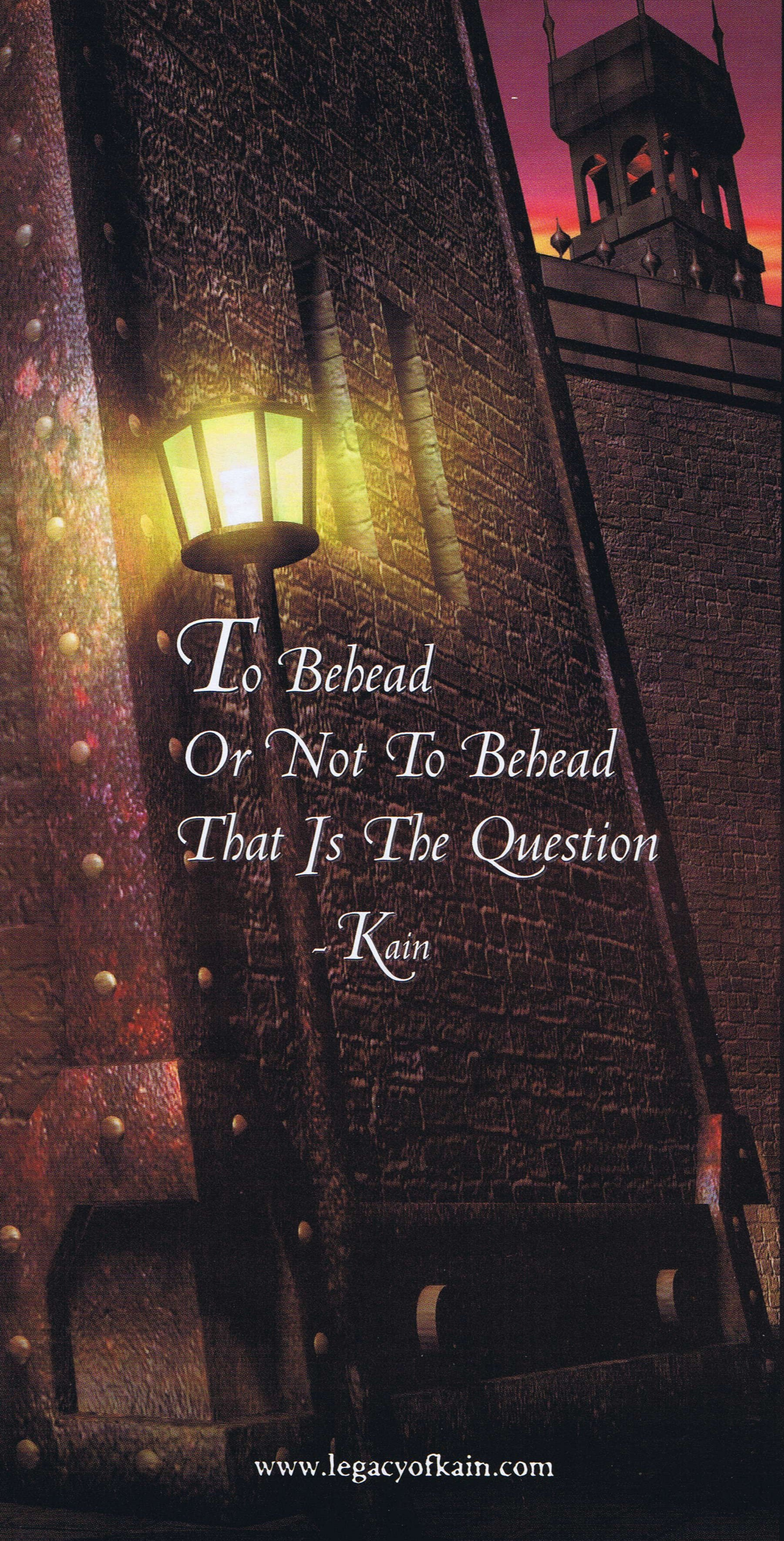
VERDICT

This is why we play Nintendo. *The Wind Waker* is an utter delight for both the mind and the senses to wallow in.

NGC INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING

96


NINTENDO
GAMECUBE





Kain, the most evil video game character of all time, is back to reclaim the land of Nosgoth.



Use your Dark Gifts such as Stealth, Fury and Charm to claim vengeance on your enemies.



Bare-clawed or with weapons, engage your enemies in close combat, then drain their corpses of blood.

Blood Omen 2
The Legacy of Kain Series

Crystal Dynamics

15

EIDOS Interactive
eidos.com

"*Dark Alliance* has dragged the franchise out of the Dark Ages"





△ Sonya blows one of her deadly kisses and prepares to cheap her way to victory.



△ Just what everyone needs up their sleeves. A pair of plaited strawberry jelly laces and couple of knives.



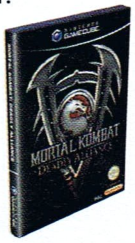
MORTAL KOMBAT DEADLY ALLIANCE

Kombat evolves! Midway's infamous fighter comes back from the dead…

INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	MIDWAY
PUBLISHER	MIDWAY
PLAYERS	1–2
MEMORY CARD PAGES	1
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO

WHEN'S IT OUT?
By the time you read this it'll be in every good games emporium the world over.



COST: £40

GET INTO THE GAME

Simpleton or slugger – whatever your style, let us ease you in gently…

KONQUEST

The Arcade mode is probably the first one you'll want to rush into, but we'd advise setting off on the game's Konquest mode first of all. This mode breaks each characters' moves into bite-sized chunks of tutorials. By teaching your each basic move-set across each style in typical baby-step fashion, it makes memorising general functions much, much easier – consequently, linking them into specials or juggle combos will soon become second nature. Maybe.



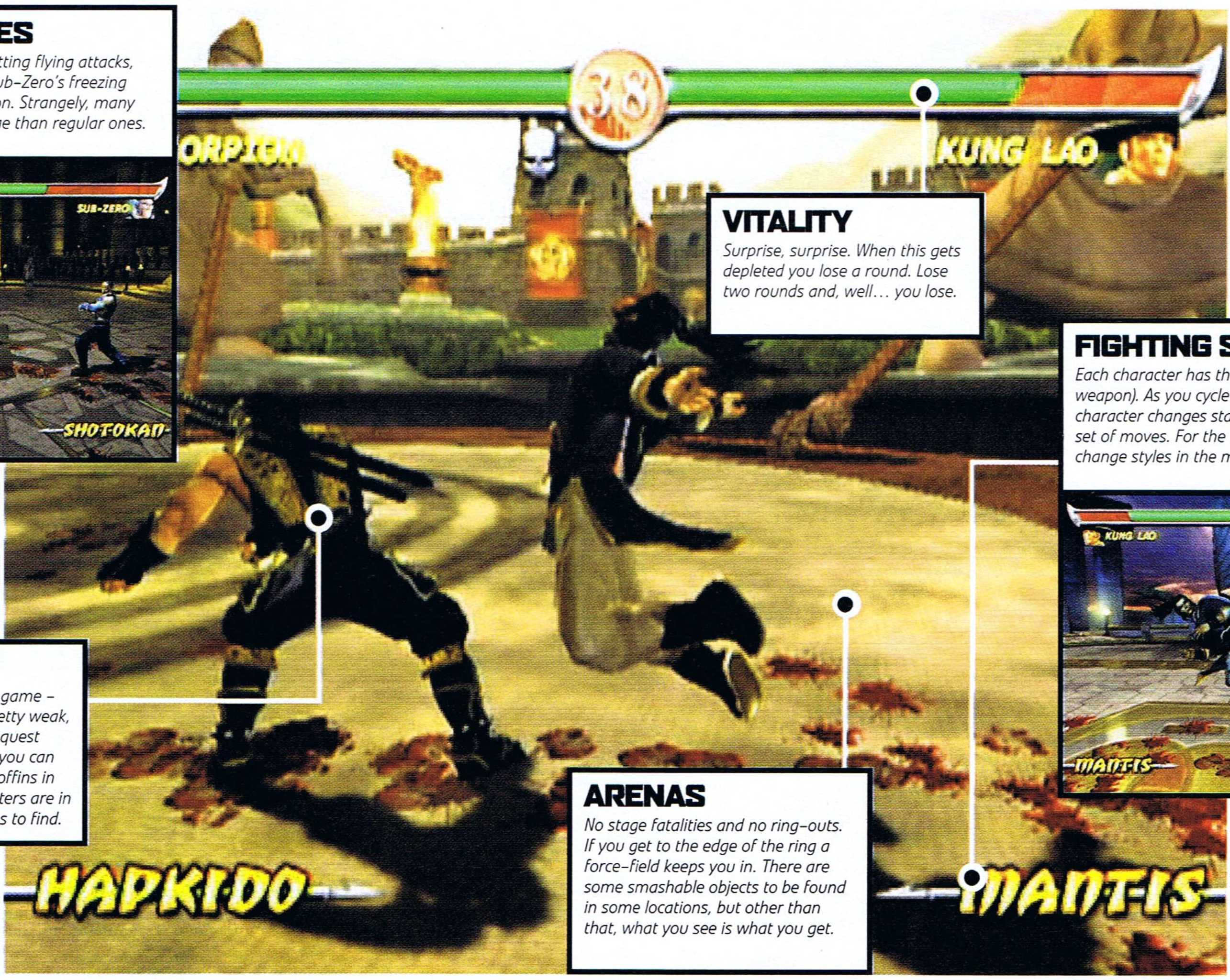
MORTAL KOMBAT: DEADLY ALLIANCE

Killing with a capital K! The granny-scaring offend-'em-up returns…

SPECIAL MOVES

Includes projectiles, multi-hitting flying attacks, and old favourites such as Sub-Zero's freezing ability and Scorpion's harpoon. Strangely, many special moves do less damage than regular ones.





VITALITY

Surprise, surprise. When this gets depleted you lose a round. Lose two rounds and, well… you lose.

FIGHTING STYLES

Each character has three (which includes a weapon). As you cycle through them your character changes stance and adopts a different set of moves. For the harder combos, you need to change styles in the middle of a flurry of hits.



CHARACTERS

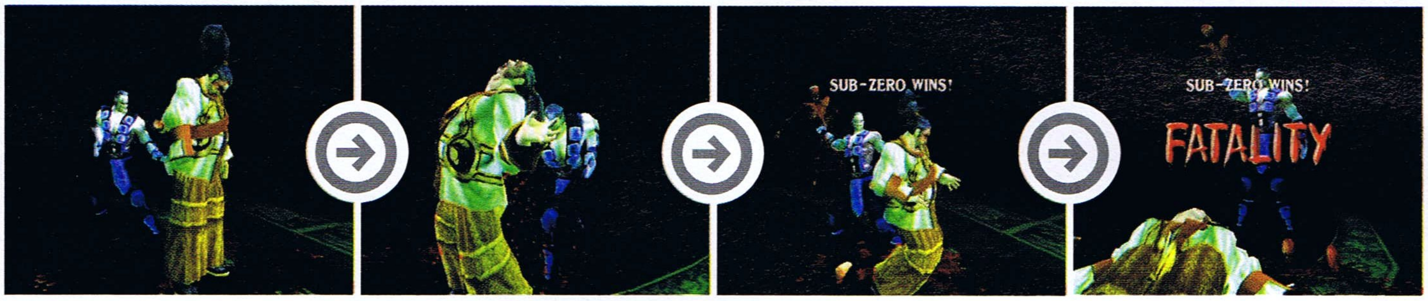
There are over twenty in the game – to begin with the roster is pretty weak, but as you fight through Konquest mode you get Kurrency that you can use to open one of the 676 coffins in the Krypt. The hidden characters are in here and take absolutely ages to find.

ARENAS

No stage fatalities and no ring-outs. If you get to the edge of the ring a force-field keeps you in. There are some smashable objects to be found in some locations, but other than that, what you see is what you get.

FINISH HIM!

No Mortal Kombat game would be complete without fatalities, and Deadly Alliance has some of the nastiest yet – if the GC's pad will let you pull them off! Sadly, there are no Babalities or Friendships to add diversity to the end of a bout.



It's not exactly going to take much work to deliver the best beat-'em-up on Gamecube. The competition is pretty grim. The (otherwise very good) *Capcom Vs SNK 2* is ruined by the GC joypad. *Bloody Roar* is painfully mediocre, while the less said about the godawful *X-Men: Next Dimension* the better. Enter *Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance* to mop up the stragglers…

Going by this game's past heritage, you'd be forgiven for thinking it was only going to add to Gamecube's mounting pile of battling dreck, but believe it or not it doesn't. *Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance* has admirably managed to drag the franchise out of the Dark Ages. It's been spruced up for the next generation and, while managing to retain what little that was good about the series, has managed to throw in some worthwhile surprises and innovative touches, too.

Without boring you too much about the, er, 'plot' (check out last month's in-depth preview if you want more details on that), another tournament is being held to decide the fate of Earth Realm. Once again, a motley crew of demigods, humans, sorcerers and assorted weirdos have to do battle with each other, utilising an array of regular and over-the-top special moves in heated battles. In essence it's your standard one-on-one, three-round affair – except in the execution, as it were, things are markedly different than before.

THE NEXT DIMENSION

The most striking difference, of course, is the game's move to 3D. It works, too. Well, usually, anyway. It mightn't be as fluid as say, *Soul Calibur* – the characters feel a little cumbersome at times – but the action is still smooth and responsive enough. The fighters themselves, while not the most inspired creations, are very well animated, with some impressive motion-capture work on display, especially with the more flamboyant combos. The only real disappointment with the move to 3D is the fact that circling your opponent is nowhere near as speedy as it should be (which can make instinctive evasion an often frustrating procedure), and the omission of ring-outs and stage-specific finishing moves (such as spiked pits and multi-levels) from the earlier games seems like an opportunity wasted.

These are, of course, pretty minor complaints, as it's the actual fighting that's the most important aspect – and thankfully, that's an



FAILS FROM THE KRYPT

Opening secrets is a bothersome business – don't be fooled by the array of coffins to choose from. Many of the extras aren't really worth the bother, and some don't have anything in at all. This wouldn't be much of a problem if the expensive coffins promised worthwhile booty.

DID YOU KNOW? Opposing a $2.2 million development grant given to Midway in 2000, Christians dressed as wise men chanted "Games for sharing, dolls for caring, never for violent play" in downtown Chicago. Nice work.

"The Krypt holds literally hundreds of secrets"

THE RULES OF KOMBAT

It's a real mixed bag alright. Some great bits, some dodgy bits – but on the whole, a lot of fun.



THE BLOOD

Blood spurting out of your opponents is a satisfying sight – especially when it's face-blood. Any blood on the arena floor gets spread about messily as your feet trample through it. As usual, it can be turned off.



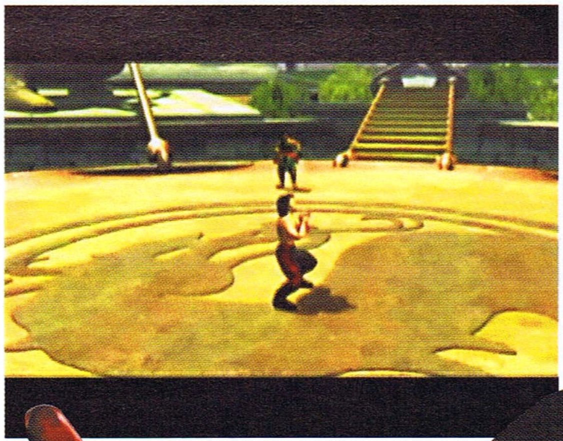
SPECIAL MOVES

More ludicrous and flamboyant than ever before. You can use telekinesis to slam opponents on the ground – or, as in the case illustrated above, freeze people and use them as impromptu surfboards. Bodacious!



FIGHTING STYLES

One may, for example, give your character quicker, weaker attacks, while another style dishes out slower but heavier-hitting moves. Play Konquest mode to get an understanding on how to link them all together.



FMV INTRO

Like something ripped from the Mega CD, the FMV is of a despicably grainy quality.



SECRETS

Opening coffins in the Krypt unlocks anything from new characters to concept art. The vast majority of the secrets, however, prove to be a little disappointing.



CHEAPNESS

Mashing like a total wazzock is just as useful as using the convoluted, workmanlike combos. In this case, we rack up over 130 hits with the SAME BUTTON. Now that's what you call a tight fighting system. Not.



area in which *Deadly Alliance* delivers. Well, just about.

CUT AND THRUST

MK has had its fighting system completely overhauled, and it's certainly a change for the better. Despite the game playing vastly differently from before, many of the the best elements, such as insane juggle-combos and the infamous fatalities, have been kept in place – even the special moves are executed in corresponding ways. That's about where the similarities end, though. New to the series is *Deadly Alliance*'s innovative use of fighting styles to add more depth to the proceedings.

It's a commendable addition, and watching your character change stances and pull off a combo across all three styles can be a very satisfying experience. Each character also has a weapon they can draw (this is actually the third 'style'), opening up yet another new repertoire of attacks for you to master. But appearances can be

"WHY BOTHER DELIVERING A WELL-CALCULATED NINE-HIT COMBO WHEN INFINITES CAN BE ACHIEVED USING A SINGLE BUTTON?"

DID YOU KNOW? The controversy surrounding *Mortal Kombat* led to the formation of the US's ESRB rating system that is still in place today. Sega even developed their own rating system, but it never caught on.

MORTAL KOMBAT: DEADLY ALLIANCE

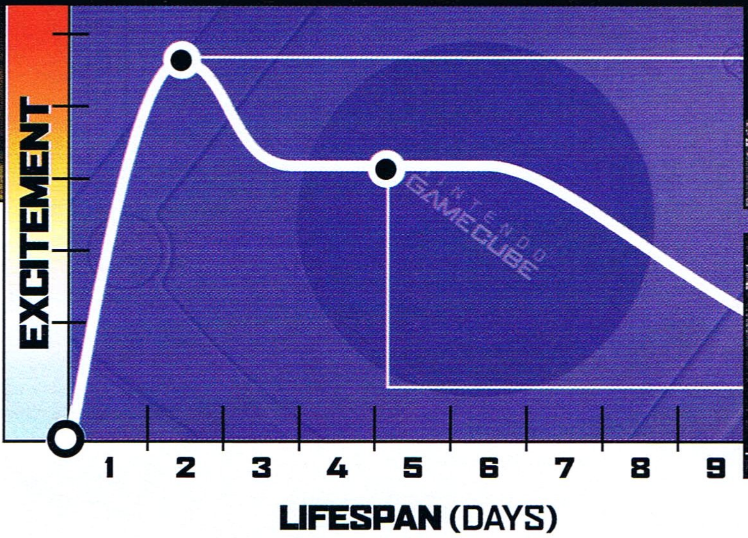
Killing with a capital K! The granny-scaring offend-'em-up returns…

NGC EVENT-O-METER

It's a non-stop rollercoaster of swordplay and ultraviolence.



Despite the moaning, for sheer blood-splattering violence, *Dark Alliance* is highly amusing, and if you just want to slug it out with your mates it's definitely worth a look. Just be warned, though… *Soul Calibur* it ain't.





HIGH POINT

Plenty of meat

There's a whole lot to master with all the characters and styles. You'll be plugging away for ages in an attempt to get everything unlocked.



LOW POINT

Poor basics

While there's a great deal of entertainment to be had, hardcore fight fans will be disappointed by the basic fighting dynamics.



△ **The blood is just plain silly at times. By the end of a bout the arena floor is covered with the stuff.**







somewhat deceptive. Initially, it seems as though you have a massive array of moves at your disposal, but once you've spent some time with it, the reality dawns on you that many of the moves remain the same in each style, at least as far as their effect and potential uses are concerned, and changing your style rarely forces your opponent to change his strategy. Moreover, most characters only have access to one standard throw. In a game where you can approach opponents from multiple angles, it seems a shame that you can't really execute multiple grapple moves.

Regardless, it's clear Midway have spent a great deal of effort trying to turn this into something special, and when it comes down to it, it is very good fun to play. But while attention has been lavished on the game's extra styles, grisly fatalities, and hidden secrets, someone totally forgot to pay any attention to the basics, such as the balancing of the regular moves.

OUT FOR THE COUNT

For beat-'em-up purists, the initial feeling of depth will soon be exposed for the charade that it is. Why bother changing styles, popping up your opponent, and delivering a well calculated nine-hit combo when the holy grail of 'infinites' is so easy to achieve with A SINGLE BUTTON? The damage done on high-end combos decreases with each hit, but what's the point if you can easily stun your opponent with a simple slap before reinitiating the cheap moves? Simple aspects such as the number of frames taken for a character to block, or for basic moves to connect, haven't been taken care of and so bouts (unless you come to a gentleman's agreement not to employ certain tactics) degenerate into a test of timing and memory rather than anticipation and skill.

Happily, Midway have managed to make up for every gaping hole in *Dark Alliance*'s fighting system with beautifully gory presentation and a staggering array of extras. The Krypt holds literally hundreds of secrets (676 to be exact, but a lot of them are pretty worthless), among them a host of unlockable characters and costumes, which keeps you both hooked in single-player and suitably entertained in multiplayer as the the roster expands.

Deadly Alliance is hardly without its faults, but it's still the best fighter on Gamecube so far, and as a two-player scrapper it'll occupy your time… at least until *Soul Calibur 2* rears its ugly head. Definitely worth a look.

GERAINT EVANS



BRUISED

In a rather nice touch, smacking your opponent in the face can mess them up real bad. Close-ups of the characters reveal extensive facial bruising after a particularly nasty bout. In this example, we spend a good couple of minutes messing up Sonya's ugly face. We're pleased with the results.

+

- Three fighting styles for each character.
- Loads to unlock.
- Entertaining and gory.

−

- The basic moves are poorly balanced.
- Some of them are ridiculously cheap.

IF YOU LIKE THIS…

Bloody Roar
Activision
NGC/74 74%
Workmanlike scrapper with unique animal twist.



8 VISUALS

Inconsistent quality of the arenas is made up for by the sweet animation.

7 SOUNDS

Tunes are bog-standard but the sound effects are nice and meaty.

6 MASTERY

It looks and moves okay but it's hardly exploited its full potential.

8 LIFESPAN

If you find you enjoy it, you'll be playing it for months and months.

VERDICT

Best *MK* yet – but still far from being a fully rounded fighter. The wealth of options and entertainment value make it worth it.

NGC INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING

80

"A sad excursion to the planet *Final Fight*"



△ Metal spiders say hello: John stomps them.



△ It's just like the Philip K Dick short story!



△ Plastic R'n'B goons *NSYNC prepare to get concussed real nice, like.



△ Anderton 'interviews' a 'suspect'. With his fists. There are 40 levels of this rubbish. FORTY.



△ *Minority Report* requires only basic brain stem-cells to complete.

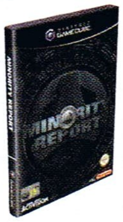
MINORITY REPORT

A minority of fun! Kick perps in the face through 40 levels of brainless movie adaptation. Then kick them again.

INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	TREYARCH
PUBLISHER	ACTIVISION
PLAYERS	1
MEMORY CARD PAGES	4
GBA LINK-UP	NO
WIDESCREEN	YES
SURROUND SOUND	YES

WHEN'S IT OUT?
Minority Report is out in the shops now. Or you could just burn four ten-pound notes instead.



COST: £40

We normally applaud games that let you boot unconscious thugs in the head, kick them around the floor like a sack of spuds for as long as you like, then pick 'em up, hoof them in the knackers, and throw them through a plate glass window. Proper, no-nonsense gaming, that is. But when it's also a title's *sole feature of note*, there's clearly something wrong.

Still, it's nice to see the developers paid close attention to the source material, for your main objective in *Minority Report* is to smash things up and hurt people with fists, and weapons just like Tom Cruise does in the movie. For example, there's the bit where he throws some bat-wielding hoods through an office window before demolishing all the furniture in a fit of pique; the bit where he escapes the Department of Precrime by beating up some office workers (who attack him with pipes); or the bit in the mall, where he just duffs up more people for no reason.

Okay, the movie wasn't great, but we were expecting something a bit more cerebral. There was plenty of opportunity for a dark, sprawling sci-fi adventure, where you had to solve puzzles and hide from the law, while trying to work out who you're supposed to murder and why, but all we got was a sad excursion to planet *Final Fight*, essentially the *Spider-Man* engine with some movie themes clumsily pasted on. A third-person beat-'em-up based on David Lynch's The Straight Story would have been as apt.

Loose-fitting themes aside, it's a dull, workaday fighting game with jerky, jaggy visuals the N64 could have handled, a useless camera and a few throwaway weapon and power-up buying options, but – apart from comedy police brutality – it's hard to sustain enough interest to club your way through yet another level of identical goons/cops/robots. Mindless violence is all well and good, but this isn't even that sophisticated.

> **"APART FROM THE COMEDY POLICE BRUTALITY, IT'S DIFFICULT TO SUSTAIN ENOUGH INTEREST"**

DAN GEARY

+
- Kick people in the nuts!
- Stamp on their heads!
- Throw them through panes of plate glass!

–
- Depressing, tedious.
- A criminally wasted opportunity.
- Poorly balanced.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...
Spider-Man
Activision
NGC/69 72%
Same sort of thing but done far better. Buy this instead.



4 VISUALS
Jaggy, grey, jerks around like a boggle-eyed raver. Not good.

6 SOUNDS
Nice whimpering and crunching sounds when you put the boot in.

4 MASTERY
Okay concussion rifle effects, but generally ignores the very concept.

5 LIFESPAN
Forty levels – but they're *all the same*. Still, if that's your poison…

VERDICT
Hilariously daft and incongruously violent – they should have saved it for the Los Angeles riot franchise. Barely a game.

NGC INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING

39


Save Armadillos.
Eat new
Dime
Nuggets
Big Pack
Crunchy caramel inside. Smooth chocolate outside. Try the new cruelty-free alternative.

"Jango tap-dances around levels like a heavily armed Lionel Blair"



ENVIRONMENT
Some levels are rather lovely (such as Coruscant), others are just your standard industrial, metallic affairs. Unfortunately, the poor textures do little to inspire any sense of awe.

TARGETING LOCK
Just like in Zelda. Hit the R-trigger and watch Jango do the strafe dance while his blaster fire cuts down crims like the scum they are. It's a bit of a no-brainer to be honest, but you'll be thankful for it when things get difficult.

JANGO
His skills include rolling under low obstacles, crouching through tunnels, burning through grates, jumping from side to side as well as jetting into the air and across chasms. He can also grab ledges and shimmy across, Lara-style.



SELECTED WEAPON
Jango has a binding-rope, twin blasters, a flamethrower and thermal detonators at his disposal. He can also pick up other handy bits of kit as he progresses. His twin blasters can hit multiple targets at a time. Skill!



STAR WARS BOUNTY HUNTER

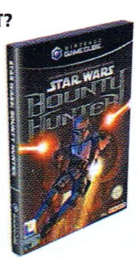
You know when you've been Jangoed! Step into the boots of the universe's campest bounty hunter and mop up the space-scum…

INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	LUCASARTS
PUBLISHER	ACTIVISION
PLAYERS	1
MEMORY CARD PAGES	1
GBA LINK-UP	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO

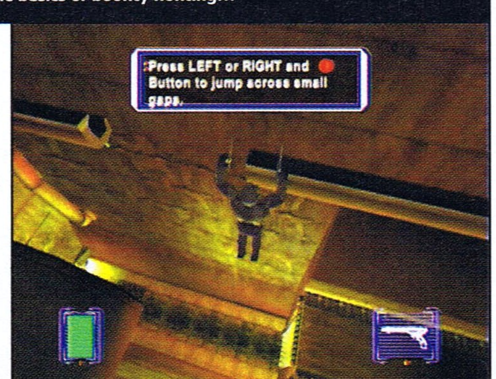
WHEN'S IT OUT?
Out now in the States – EU peasants will have to wait until February, though.

COST: £40



GET INTO THE GAME
Getting to grips with the basics of bounty hunting…

BOUNTY BOREDOM
The game starts off nice and easy, with the opening levels talking you through the basic controls. You actually start off proceedings without your jet-pack and the look of the opening sections is pretty uninspiring, so it's easy to assume you've been landed with a duffer. Stick with it though, and things do get much, much better, and once you stop looking for Jango's shortcomings you'll be flying around like pro in no time. If you're not into the movies though, chances are you won't want to bother with it…



It's the second level of *Bounty Hunter*. The objectives read "Find Meeko", "Chase Meeko" and "Fly after Meeko". Genius. Now is it just us, or does that basically boil down to chasing him… erm, chasing him and, um, chasing him some more? Well yes. Yes it does – and believe it or not the experience is hardly stimulating the first time around, let alone the third. The fear that *Bounty Hunter* will be another tepid, unimaginative waste of time soon becomes overpowering.

It's certainly been some time (well, since *Rogue Leader*, anyway) that those scrolling yellow letters preceded a game that not only had us brimming with genuine excitement, but actually did the Star Wars licence the kind of justice the likes of *TIE Fighter* did on the PC all those years ago.



PLOT MACHINE
Bounty Hunter's back-story is, oddly, also the game's best feature. The 'real-time' cut-scenes far exceed the awful ones in Jedi Knight, while the CGI bits between levels are all excellently done. Best of all, though, is the voice-acting (using the real voice of Jango, Temuera Morrison) and the intriguing back-story to the Fett family. Brilliant.

STAR WARS: BOUNTY HUNTER

Strap on your helmet and get ready for civilian-killing fun!



△ Once you get to Coruscant, the game starts to become better than the opening levels initially suggest...



△ The slug-like Hutts pitch humans against beasts for sport.







△ Jango can often use weapons dropped by enemies he defeats.



△ The jungle holds bounty as well as wild beasts to battle.



△ Jango cuts through a grille before kicking it open...



Bounty Hunter, it's safe to say, is hardly going to change that.

The early stages, like we said, do nothing to instill confidence in what's to come. Jango feels lightweight and floaty as you guide him around the opening sections. He dances around laughably, wobbling his blasters at anything he's locked onto, which emit an endless, irritating peow! peow! peow! sound, which grates horribly as he tap-dances around the level like a heavily armed Lionel Blair. This is not exactly how we envisaged the blueprint of the clone army – and indeed Boba Fett – to behave. That said, you can learn to put up with it and things do improve the further through the story you get.

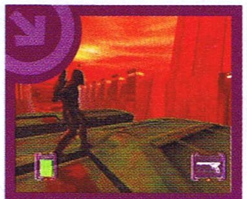
ARMY OF ME

After the rather lame opening levels, the story kicks off properly. After a message from Count Dooku, you're told to seek out a high-risk target (a dark Jedi, no less) for a substantial sum. Meanwhile, the powers that be are looking for a skilled bounty hunter to use as a template for an army of clones. No prizes for guessing who that is.

In actual fact, the story is the game's main strength. It's very well told. The cut-scenes are exceptionally well done, and for once, the voice-acting is spot on – in fact, it's probably better than the hammy rubbish in George Lucas' cinematic efforts. Jango actually has some character to him, and if you're a fan of the films, it's nice to get some proper background on who he actually is (the game takes place before Boba is grown), his place in the universe, and how he came to 'father' the clone army.

As far as the game itself is concerned, *Bounty Hunter's* nothing special. In fact, it's just competent enough to be entertaining. Viewed from a third-person perspective, you wander around each (pretty expansive) level, locking on to bad guys and blasting them until they die. They're no particular threat on their own – the only real danger they pose is when they attack en masse from a number of different levels, so dispatching them is simply a case of using the *Zelda*-style lock-on and strafing like a madman until the area is clear. No real tactics and no real brain-work involved. It's all pretty mind-numbing stuff.

Regardless of your mission objectives, it's simply a case of journeying from point A to point B and wasting any threats you encounter in between. The only particularly involving



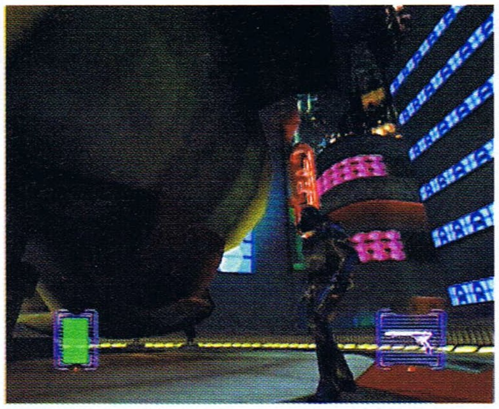
HAM CAM

Bounty Hunter's ***technical shortcomings ruin what is essentially an enjoyable game. Jango slips through platforms and fails to grab on to ledges, while the camera conspires to drive you to an early grave. Meanwhile, enemies' arms can be seen through walls, and innocent civilians bumble around like idiots into your line of fire. Disappointing.***

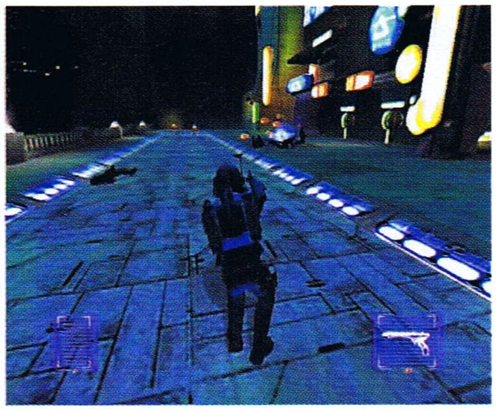
"Jango has a wrist-mounted burning tool"



△ The opening levels prove to be very dull and very... um... brown. Things do get better though.



△ You've just landed on Coruscant. Prepare for a long walk through crowds of remarkably stupid enemies.



△ The environments are large, and give a good sense of scale, but nothing really exciting ever happens in them.



NICE IDEAS...

...pity about the execution. The bounty-hunting feature where you scan the game's population and hunt them for cash is brilliant, but there's not much point to it. The weapons and gadgets are also fiddly to use, and lack character. It just isn't as satisfying as it should be.



> "PHYSICALLY SPEAKING, JANGO'S SKILL-SET ISN'T TERRIBLY DISSIMILAR TO THAT OF A CERTAIN LARA CROFT"

aspects of each level are the locations themselves.

In fairness, these aren't too shabby at all. Despite lacking any decent texture detail, the levels are quite large, and the path you take through them isn't always immediately apparent, as they're designed around Jango's healthy selections of skills. Physically speaking, his skill-set is not terribly dissimilar to that of a certain Lara Croft. The helmeted assassin can jump, hang on to platforms, shimmy across ledges, and crawl through tight spaces. Secondary to this, he has a wrist-mounted burning tool that can cut through grates as well as people, and a jet-pack that allows a limited degree of temporary flight. As a result, the levels have their fair share of hidden ledges, high platforms and vents for you to seek out. On more than one occasion, however, we were completely stumped as to where to go next as we'd failed to notice an environmental feature that we were supposed to use to our advantage.

Unfortunately, this kind of oversight isn't always the player's fault, though, as many aspects of the levels are quite inconsistent.

STAR WARS: BOUNTY HUNTER

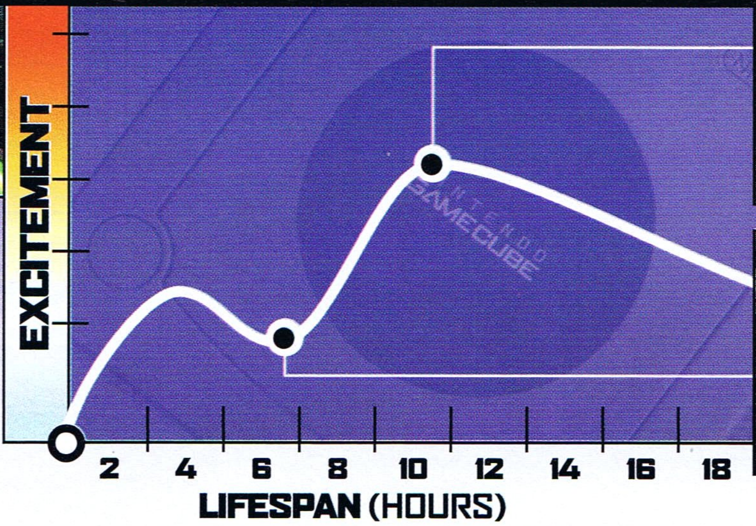
Strap on your helmet and get ready for civilian-killing fun!

NGC EVENT–O–METER

Up and down like a Jango on a jet-pack…

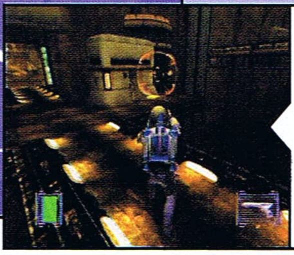


This game is strictly for the Star Wars hardcore. If you want to know more about Jango Fett then this is well worth a look. But if you're after a solid action-adventure, you're better off spending your money somewhere else…





HIGH POINT
Involvement
Getting half-way through the game and – after forgiving its many faults – watching Jango get deeper into the storyline.



LOW POINT
Falling
Trying to jump onto a platform that you should be able to stand on, only for the game to send you plummeting to your doom.

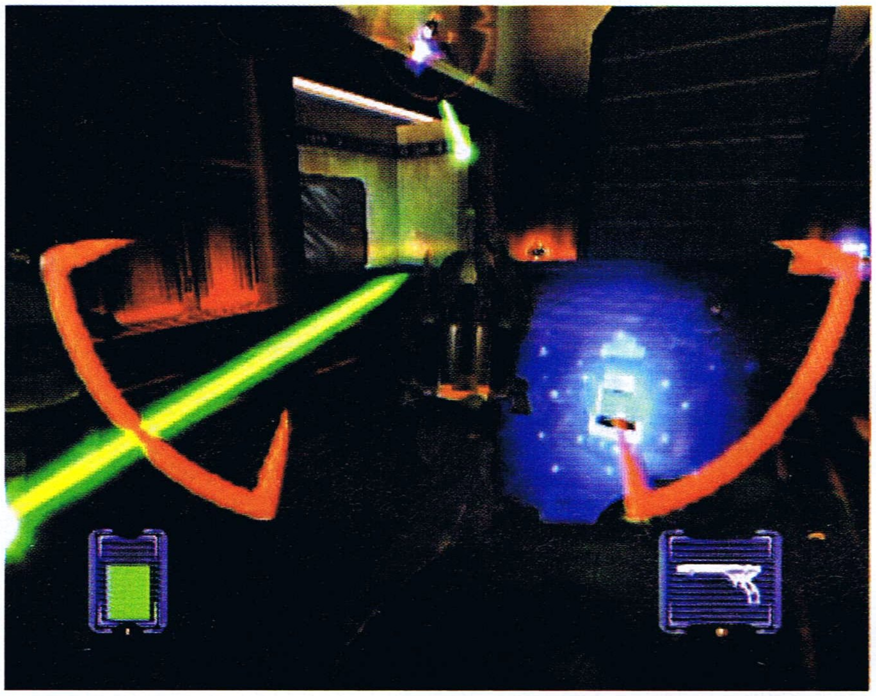


△ The opening battle of the game. Kill him to escape the arena.





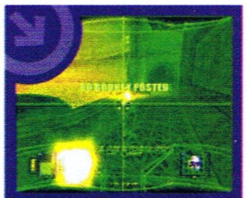
△ Jango can crouch behind rocks to find cover from incoming fire.



△ The lock-on function makes it easy to keep track of enemies but it takes any challenge out of fighting.

You might see a ledge that you'll be able to stand on, or grab hold of and shimmy around – but you might see another similar ledge that the game simply won't let you interact with. An opening in a wall that enemies can shoot through often irritatingly proves to have a one-way function, so that you can't shoot back. It's one rule for one thing, and another rule for something else – you feel a genuine sense of injustice when you've just plummeted to your death for the fifteenth time, trying to achieve something that you managed with the greatest of ease in an earlier level.

The other major gripe concerns the camera. It can freely move about in one instance, but in others it's horribly stubborn, and in tight spaces it behaves erratically – obviously, not knowing where you are can lead to untimely death or force you to backtrack through a level because you've missed a jump.



SCANNING

Every time you enter another area, it's worth using your scanning device on the locals to uncover anyone with a price on their head. Unfortunately you can't move while you do this, which means that on more than one occasion, you'll have someone pumping lasers in your face while you search your surroundings.

MUTINY ON THE BOUNTY

It's a competent enough game, but things never really go that extra mile to make it something special. The game is fast enough. It's entertaining enough, and the overall experience is engaging… enough. But all of *Bounty Hunter*'s good ideas have not been seen through to the bitter end. For example, Jango can scan the 'innocent' population of the game's levels to check if they have any bounty on their heads. If you spot them, you can tag them, capture them and then claim the bounty. But the credit system, save for unlocking extras, could have been made into so much more. Buying weapons for example, or upgrades for Jango's rather pathetic jet-pack. It would have been nice to have had levels that maybe had some more intricate puzzles or set-pieces to help spice things up mid-way through them, or perhaps Jango could have had more enemies that needed to be dispatched with specific tactics or combinations of his weapons. The objectives could have involved a little more than just bungling onwards and onwards blasting whatever idiots get in your way – but none of this has been considered.

All you're left with is a game that will only really be of interest to Star Wars fans, because of the storyline, the watchable cut-scenes and the fairly believable Star Wars atmosphere. Like we said, it's by no means a bad game – it just does what so many Star Wars titles seem to be doing right now… and that's nothing particularly interesting. Shame, really.

GERAINT EVANS

+

- Gives Jango some semblance of character.
- Story and cut–scenes.
- Mildly entertaining.

–

- Uninvolving, workmanlike levels.
- The game's good ideas haven't been explored.

IF YOU LIKE THIS…
Rogue Leader
LucasArts
NGC/68 87%
Slick, gorgeous and memorable game-shaped Star Wars joy.



6 VISUALS
Big, slick enough levels, but with weak animation and textures.

7 SOUNDS
The music is great as usual, but the effects are very repetitive.

6 MASTERY
Moments where the frame-rate jars and the level design is weak.

6 LIFESPAN
Tough later on, and the story keeps you going until the very end.

VERDICT
If you feel you *absolutely have* to buy it, then it'll prove enjoyable enough. Other action–seekers should go elsewhere.

NGC INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING
68

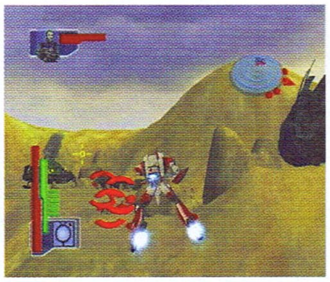
"You shift between three forms to take down waves of identikit bad guys"



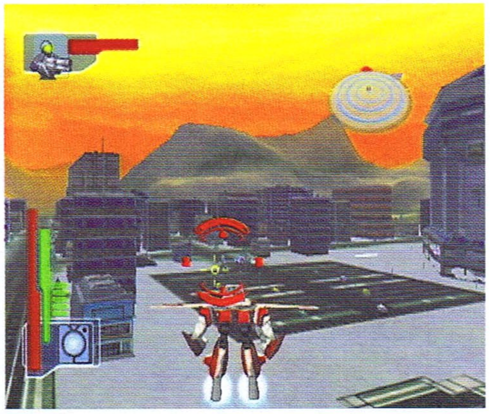
△ Shoot buildings for long enough and they'll eventually fall.



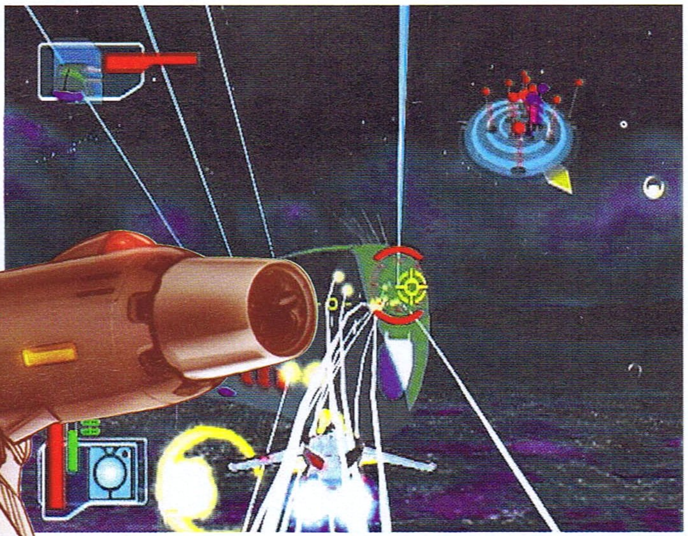
△ Walking and strafing around the city section is surprisingly good fun.



△ This desert section has you sniping at bandits and destroying their ammo.



△ Protect the central building in the city from the waves of enemies attacking from all directions.



△ Your homing-missile supply is infinite. Once you've let off five you have to wait for your stock to build up again – which doesn't take very long.



△ The targeting indicators in blue are your allies. They also show how much life your fellow units have left.



ROBOTECH BATTLECRY

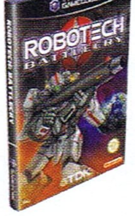
Half *Transformers*, half *Rogue Leader*, 100 per cent Saturday-morning cartoon robot action…

INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	HARMONY GOLD
PUBLISHER	TDK
PLAYERS	1-2
MEMORY CARD PAGES	1
GBA LINK-UP	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO

WHEN'S IT OUT?
Robotech is out in stores nationwide right… NOW!

COST: £40



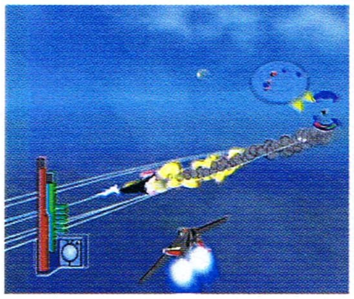
It's always refreshing to see a developer do a licence justice. While *Robotech* may not exactly be the finest shooter on the planet, sufficient care and attention has been paid to the *Robotech* series (the proper US-translation voice actors have been used, for example) to make it enjoyable enough to warrant attention.

Gameplay-wise, *Robotech: Battlecry* is rather similar to (if somewhat simpler than) something like *Rogue Leader*. Taking control of a 'Veritech' fighter, you have to shift between its three different forms to take down waves of identikit bad guys in order to fulfil different objectives.

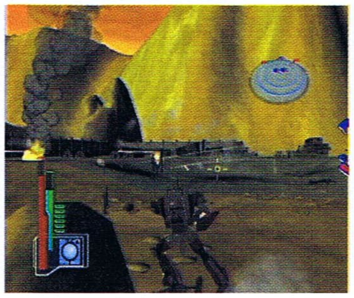
Controlling your craft couldn't be simpler. The A button boosts you faster, the shoulder triggers strafe or rolls your craft, and the analogue steers. The function that distinguishes this from your normal workaday blaster is the D-pad, which switches your fighter's form between three different incarnations, in the process altering

> **"…THE BACKING NARRATIVE IS WELL TOLD AND INVOLVING ENOUGH TO MAKE YOU WANT TO CONTINUE…"**

MISSION YOU ALREADY
Your basic objectives at a glance…



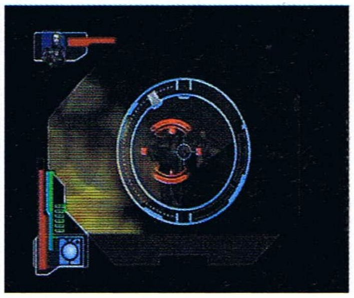
DOGFIGHTING
The old warhorse. Fly and shoot. Fly and shoot. You also get to fly and, erm… BANG!



PROTECTION
Bet you never saw this one coming. Be it a building or craft, just shoot stuff 'til it's safe.



GROUND ZERO
You're in a city and, once again, have to kill everything while buildings fall under gunfire.



SNIPE AND SALVAGE
The Veritech's sniper scope is a nice touch, as are the errand-boy mission objectives.



△ This area is notorious for enemy activity…



△ …destroy the mothership as soon as possible.



△ It might look like there are hundreds of ships here, but they're mostly just a decorative backdrop to the level.

the handling and the weapons available to you. Switching between forms is a very smooth, intuitive process. The three forms also lend another level of strategy to the proceedings, as getting to grips with each and mastering their advantages and disadvantages allows you go about tackling objectives from different angles.

THE HARD CEL

So far so good. The rather lovely cel-shaded visuals give a much-needed clarity to the proceedings, while the backing narrative to the still-frame cut-scenes is well told and involving enough to make you want to continue playing. Although that's not to say *Robotech: Battlecry* isn't without its faults. To start with, while being not too dissimilar to *Rogue Leader* or *Clone Wars*, it's all a little too repetitive at times. No matter whether your objectives are to protect a central building, snipe ammunition boxes or simply gun down hordes of enemies, you're always going about it in the same way. You look for the red dots on your radar, you get a visual on them, and you shoot until all their health has been depleted. Once dead, rinse and repeat the process. The only variations come down to the speed with which you have to dispatch them or the order in which you choose to do so.

This repetition is remedied to some extent – but again, it's mainly down to the narrative. The locations you get to fight in are always varied. From cities – complete with destructible buildings – to deserts and even space battles, there's always (repetitive action aside) something new to pop up and surprise. The environments are more often than not designed in such a way that you have to deal with situations slightly differently from mission to mission, and you're frequently rewarded by another Jackanory-style story section to get your brain involved in the plot again.

It's by no means a bad effort, and the experience is of a consistent enough quality to satisfy anyone (which is more then can be said for *Clone Wars*). If you're a fan of the *Robotech* series, we can honestly say this is not to be missed, as the game is both sizeable and accurate. If not, you'll find it an enjoyable, if unremarkable blaster.

GERAINT EVANS



KEEP IT REAL
One thing the developers have managed perfectly is to merge gameplay with the story and cut-scenes. The cel-shading of the action sections blends very well with the static cut-scenes, helping to maintain that inimitable Robotech atmosphere.

+
- True to the anime.
- Great story scenes.
- Slick visuals.
- Plenty of challenge.

–
- Simplistic blasting.
- May not appeal to non-*Robotech* fans.
- Irritating gun noises.

IF YOU LIKE THIS…
Rogue Leader
LucasArts
NGC/68 87%
One of the GC's finest (and prettiest) licensed blasters. Stunning.



8 VISUALS
Simple cel-shading, but the whole package is very well presented.

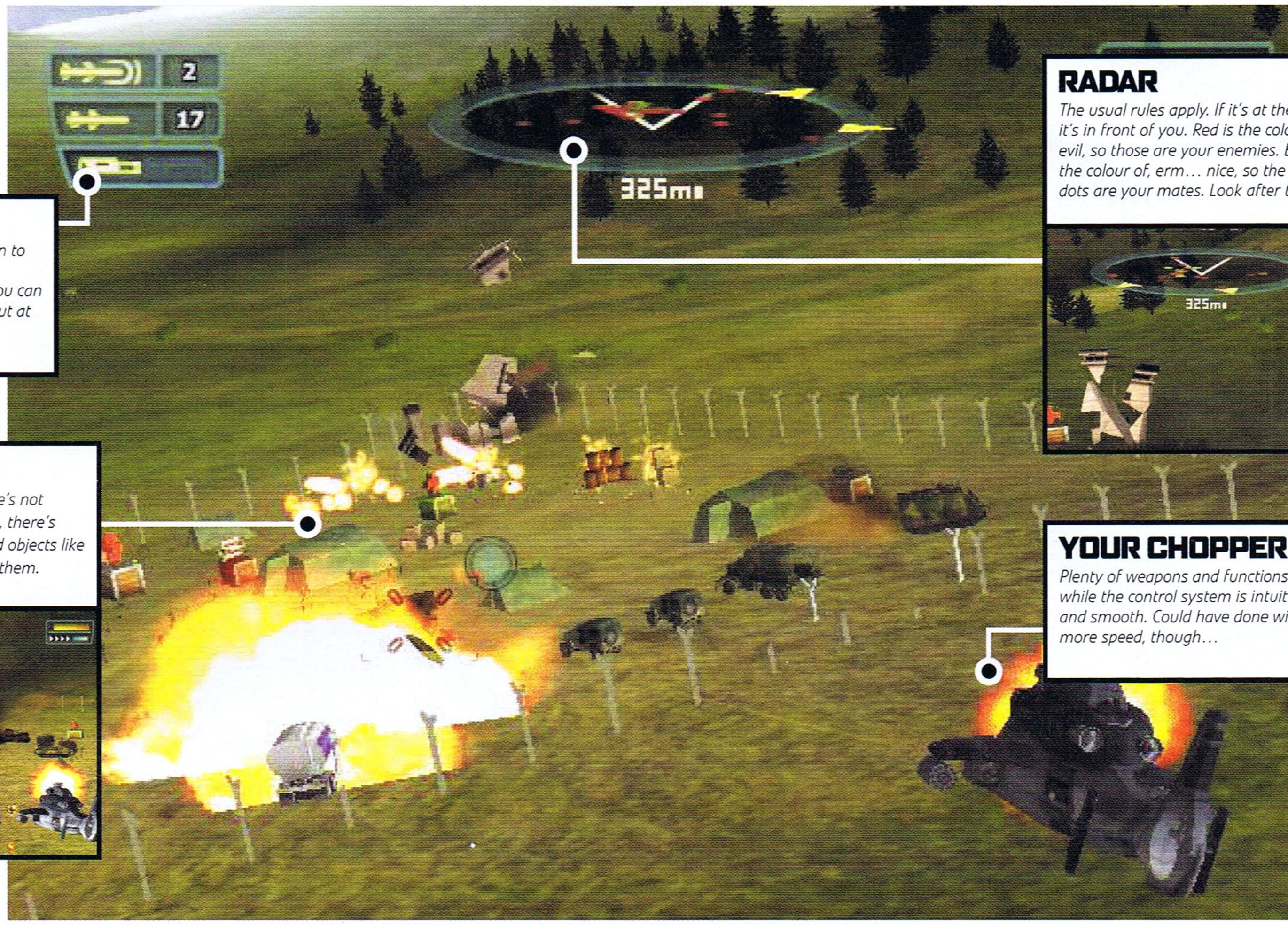
6 SOUNDS
Some cringeworthy voice-acting and truly irritating effects.

7 MASTERY
Animated cut-scenes would've been nice, but all in all it's not bad.

8 LIFESPAN
It has loads of mission to play through and it's by no means easy.

VERDICT
This is what fans of the series have been waiting for for so long. True to the anime, with sweet presentation and plenty of challenge.

NGC INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING
77



YOUR AMMO
If you run out of missiles it's down to your rapid-fire cannon. Your EMP weapon has infinite charges so you can disable enemies and take them out at your leisure. Pretty cheap, really.

ENVIRONMENTS
Rather disappointing, really. There's not much in the way of ground detail, there's some draw-in on the horizon, and objects like trees pop up as you get closer to them.



RADAR
The usual rules apply. If it's at the top it's in front of you. Red is the colour of evil, so those are your enemies. Blue is the colour of, erm… nice, so the blue dots are your mates. Look after them.

YOUR CHOPPER
Plenty of weapons and functions, while the control system is intuitive and smooth. Could have done with more speed, though…

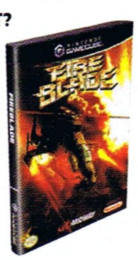
FIREBLADE

Yeeee-hawww! It's ant-eye-terrorism time! We get fired up in our choppers, dissect the enemy and cull all their their livestock…

INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	AVALANCHE
PUBLISHER	MIDWAY
PLAYERS	1
MEMORY CARD PAGES	2
GBA LINK-UP	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO

WHEN'S IT OUT?
For what it's worth, *Fireblade* is scheduled for release in the UK on the 31st of January.



COST: £40

It all sounds very clichéd. Even while we were all watching the intro, everyone knew exactly what to expect. Shadowy Terrorists, blah, blah, blah, Weapons of Mass Destruction™, blah, blah, blah. Explosions, blah. Eastern States, blah. Helicopters. Kaboom. Blah… you get the picture. One big, noisy 1990s *Desert Strike*-style picture.

While this game clearly owes a lot to the Mega Drive classic, though, it's not *quite* as derivative as you'd like to think. Visually, of course, it's leagues ahead. Despite not exactly being the most detailed game on the planet (the textures are surprisingly low-res and the draw distance isn't exactly impressive), it manages to do the job it needs to very well. At least in that the action is smooth enough not to ruin your enjoyment of the game. The rather sparse detail is also evident when you zoom in on enemy units, but again, this is justified given the smoothness of their movement (like their acceleration and deceleration) and the animation on the many infantry units that scuttle around below you.



OUT OF SIGHT
Far and away the best bits of the game are the stealth sections. In these, you have to avoid detection by making yourself invisible. If you blow too much up you'll fail the mission. The tension that surrounds picking off radio-carrying troops or disabling fleeing vehicles is something the developers should have exploited further.

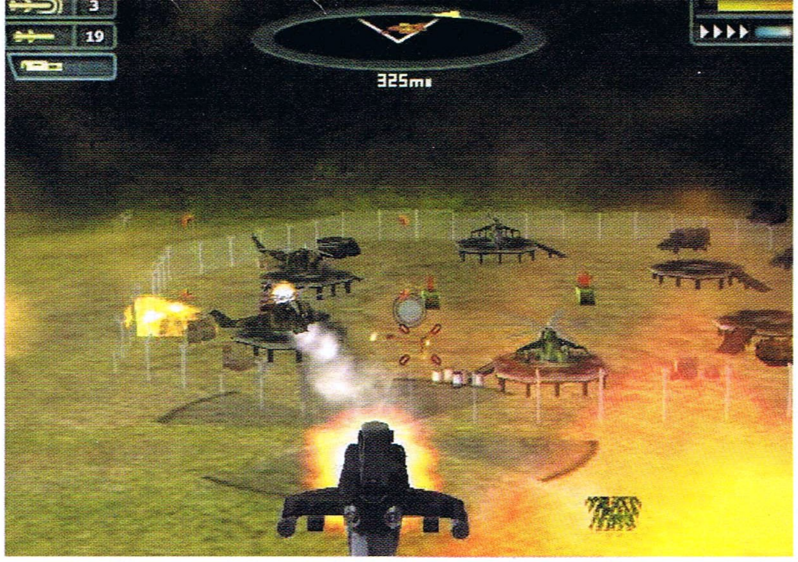
> **"ZOOMING IN ON ENEMY TROOPS AND SHOOTING OFF THEIR LEGS IS HIGHLY AMUSING AND MOST COMPELLING"**

CHOPPER CHALLENGE
For all it's graphical blandness, *Fireblade* plays rather nicely. At its core, it may well consist of tried-and-tested follow-your-radar and destroy-your-target gameplay, but there are a number of lovely little touches that make playing rather pleasant. Controlling your helicopter with the twin analogue sticks feels nice and floaty and precision movements, aiming and targeting soon become second nature. While similar objectives can be found in the likes of *Rogue Leader* and (especially) *Top Gun*, it's safe to say that they rarely feel as repetitive – mainly because of the different enemies you encounter and the range of weapons and abilities at your disposal.

Your chopper has a couple of different missiles to use as well as a cannon, and

FIREBLADE

Kill terrorist scum in the highest-tech chopper since Airwolf



△ Feel free to pump missiles at the opposition – extra pick-ups are rarely in short supply.



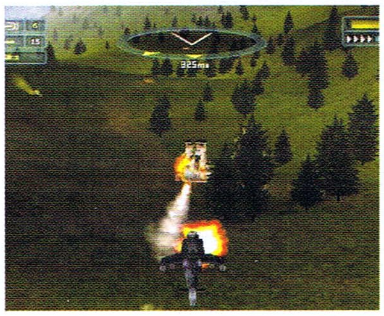
△ Carnage like this isn't always necessary when you can just disable enemies.



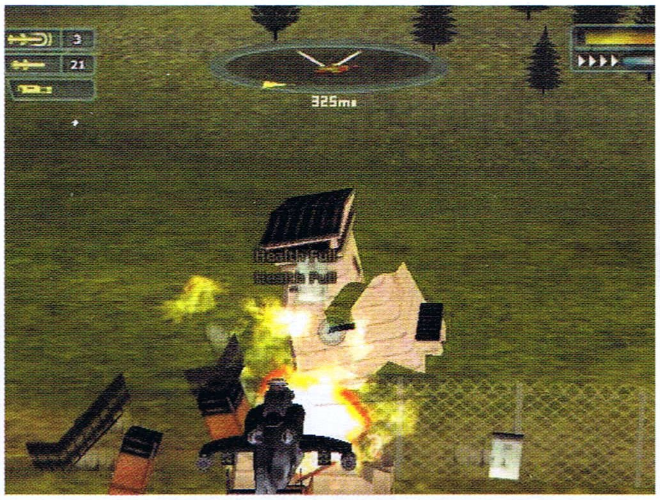
△ The detail may seem a little low, but it helps things run very smoothly indeed.











△ Make sure you wreak havoc on everything for the highest medal possible.

pleasingly, a slow-firing sniping weapon that lets you zoom in on targets from afar. Secondary to these, you also have an EMP weapon that can be used to temporarily disable jeeps, tanks and any other machine-based units, while your stealth mode (that turns you invisible but greatly decreases your speed) allows you to sneak around without fear of detection – as long as you don't blow everything up.

So full marks for trying, then. The combined use of stealth and all-out blasting is certainly as engaging as it is satisfying. Decimating whole armies with your rockets while strafing wildly to avoid enemy gunfire is initially exhilarating. Zooming in on enemy infantry (oblivious to your invisible helicopter) and shooting off their legs is both highly amusing and perversely compelling. Moreover, finding the landscapes poorly rendered livestock and massacring them with your chain gun is something that rarely loses its appeal – but for all the highlights there are some very disappointing problems which really detract from the experience.



AIM AND MAIM

One of the best aspects of the game is the sniping function. Make yourself invisible and fly as close to infantry units as you can before zooming in on them. You can then proceed to shoot off their heads, arms and legs. Highly amusing, especially when they're running to alert their buddies of your presence. Mwahaha.

STEALTH STUPIDITY

You see, after playing *Fireblade* for an hour or so, it doesn't take a genius to figure out that this ability to make yourself invisible is just too good to not take advantage of – *all the time*. Making use of your one-shot tank disabling EMP is also far too easy to do. Why spend minutes avoiding potentially hazardous gunfire attempting to blow an armoured unit up with missiles when you can make yourself invisible and render it useless in just two seconds. If there are more units, just disable them too. Once you're satisfied the threat around you is negligible, you can simply decloak yourself, annihilate the crippled force, grab any dropped pick-ups to replenish any health or weapon stock that may have been dented, recloak and repeat.

After spending mission after mission, cheating your way around the game it all starts to feel hollow and rather pointless. Granted, the difficulty is ramped up to super-tough in later levels, but by the time you get there, the process of cloaking, sniping, EMPing, decloaking and destroying will have undoubtedly started to grate. It's a shame, really, because up to that point, it's a very entertaining (if rough-looking) arcade-come-simulation war game, and were it not for this rather silly oversight on the part of the game's design, it could have been well worth recommending.

GERAINT EVANS

+

- Great sniping and stealth-based sections.
- Decapitate people.
- Varied missions.

–

- Let down by poorly balanced weaponry.
- Looks ropey.
- Soon gets tedious.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Top Gun: Combat Zones
Virgin Interactive
NGC/72 71%
The only other flight sim available on GC.



5 VISUALS

The lack of detail and sparse environments let the side down.

6 SOUNDS

Some pretty awful military music and stock gunfire effects.

4 MASTERY

Smooth, but fairly slow with silly oversights in the game's design.

6 LIFESPAN

If you enjoy it and want to stick with it, it'll take some time to beat.

VERDICT

Enjoyable for a while, but the game's failings soon drag it down to mediocrity. *Fireblade* could have been *so* much better…

NGC
INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING

59

One motorbike not enough? Why not weld two of them together?



DISTANCE GAUGE

Shows exactly how far you're lagging behind the next rider, or how much of a lead you've managed to build up. Interesting, ain't she?

BOOST METER

Each stunt you perform adds a little slice of yellow turbo power to the circular gauge right here. This can be used at any time, and is essential for keeping pace with the all those relentlessly efficient computer rivals.

STUNTS

Stunts can be powered up while you're driving along, ready for action as soon as you've got enough height off the top of a jump. It's the usual sort of twists, flips and hanging-off-the-handlebars stuff.

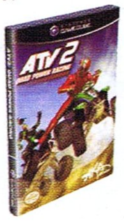
CHECKPOINT

You have to pass directly between the smoking checkpoint markers. Just clipping the outside edge won't do the job, and you're not allowed to take any shortcuts.

INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	CLIMAX
PUBLISHER	ACCLAIM
PLAYERS	1-2
MEMORY CARD PAGES	9
GBA LINK-UP	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO

WHEN'S IT OUT?
Should be available right about now for UK PAL machines or US NTSC import.



COST: £40

ATV QUAD POWER RACING 2

In quad we trust, as Acclaim take us for a stunt-filled spin on every trendy farmer's favourite utility vehicle.

These ATV things might have been designed so that farmers can zip around their fields, feeding powdered sheep to BSE-riddled chickens without having to get their hands infected. But like so many other pieces of farming equipment, it's much more fun when used for a spot of sporting activity.

ATV Quad Power Racing 2 takes the humble four-wheeled light utility vehicle out of agriculture and into the world of stunt-based, punk-soundtracked adrenaline sports.

It's very much like a low-budget *Wave Race: Blue Storm* on dry land, or a stripped-down *Excitebike 64* meets *SSX Tricky*. Controlling the speedy vehicles calls for careful balancing, using the analogue stick to tilt the airborne ATV to match the surface it's going to land on. Leaning backwards or forwards in conjunction with the accelerator or brake helps the ATV gain momentum, and the left shoulder button makes it lean onto two wheels for sharp cornering.

> **"IT'S VERY MUCH LIKE A LOW-BUDGET WAVE RACE ON DRY LAND, OR A STRIPPED-DOWN EXCITEBIKE 64"**

All of these moves add a little sliver of yellow to your turbo meter, which can be activated whenever you feel the need for an extra burst of power. And since the computer racers trundle around setting consistently fast lap times, a bit of turbo is always useful.

There's the usual selection of gameplay modes, from training through to career, plus a dedicated stunt track with loops and ramps all over the place. In fact, everything is in place for a racing game that might appeal to those who found *Wave Race* too hard and fiddly (this is miles easier).

But others, including us, may find the way the vehicles handle like *San Francisco Rush* in low gravity just a tad off-putting.

It's more than competent, but if you're after something that takes a firmer grip on your excitement glands, you should give *Wave Race* another go.

MARTIN KITTS

+
- Fast and smooth.
- Dedicated stunt track for larking about.
- Sensitive controls.

–
- Floaty handling.
- Not the greatest feeling of competing in a real race.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...
Wave Race: Blue Storm
Nintendo
NGC/67 91%
Similar sort of thing, only lots better.



6 VISUALS
Backgrounds range from big and detailed to big and empty.

6 SOUNDS
A short selection of the usual brand of US stunt-driving music.

6 MASTERY
Smooth, few noticeable glitches, and sensitive analogue controls

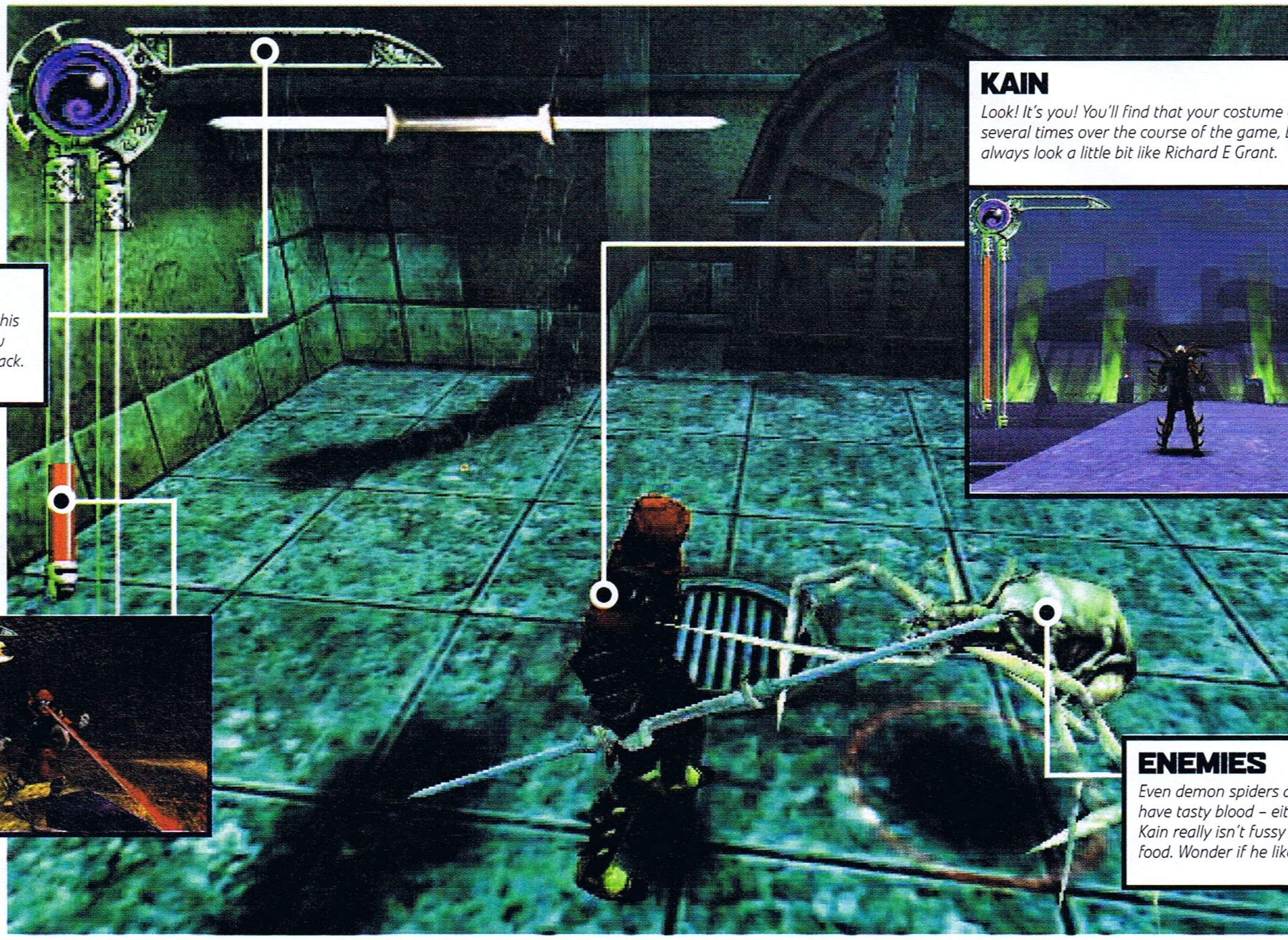
7 LIFESPAN
A selection of locked ATVs to work towards by beating the game.

VERDICT
There aren't all that many racing games on the console right now, and while this is hardly a classic, it's still one of the better ones.

NGC INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING

70

"Killing is something you're going to have to do rather a lot of"



KAIN
Look! It's you! You'll find that your costume changes several times over the course of the game, but you always look a little bit like Richard E Grant.

RAGE METER
Every time you block an assault, this goes up slightly. When it's full, you can perform a more powerful attack.

BLOOD METER
This is basically your health, and it decreases slowly over time, so keeping it topped up is crucial.

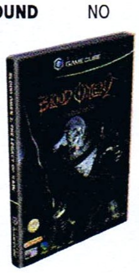
ENEMIES
Even demon spiders apparently have tasty blood – either that, or Kain really isn't fussy about his food. Wonder if he likes snails.

INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	CRYSTAL DYNAMICS
PUBLISHER	EIDOS
PLAYERS	1
MEMORY CARD PAGES	1
GBA LINK-UP	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO

WHEN'S IT OUT?
You can satisfy your thirst for blood right now. If that's your thing.

COST: £40



BLOOD OMEN 2 LEGACY OF KAIN

Can this vampiric Michael Bolton-a-like prevail, or is Kain unable?

Even though the PlayStation 2 version has been out a little while already, toothsome action/puzzle game *Blood Omen 2* has now crept its shadowy way onto the purple box of glee. Will Kain's bittersweet embrace lure us to the side of darkness, or will it simply suck?

The intro cut-scene describes a fairly straightforward fall from grace for our pasty anti-hero. Despite commanding legions of bloodthirsty troops, Kain suffers defeat at the hands of the Sarafan Lord, a big glow-in-the-dark fella. Awakening in a strange bed, centuries later, it is suddenly very urgent that Kain must follow a strictly linear path through various environments, solve puzzles by flipping switches and tugging crates around, occasionally battling other powerful vampires until he gets to Day-Glo Boy. And then… well, kill him.

Killing is, as you might expect, something you're going to have to do rather a lot of.

> "KAIN MUST FOLLOW A STRICTLY LINEAR PATH, FLIPPING SWITCHES AND TUGGING CRATES AROUND"

You have a Blood Meter which starts off pretty darn small, and needs to be regularly topped-up, else Kain has a funny turn. It's simple enough to lock on to townsfolk wandering the bleak metropolis (for that's the kind of place you find yourself in at the start) – a few quick strikes and they usually lie down and let you sup claret. Impressively, you can do this from several feet away. The first time it happens, there's a ghoulish thrill to it, but since this is a rather integral part of gameplay, you're going to have to do it… All. The. Blooming. Time. As you might have guessed, it gets really old, really quickly.

The combat is, admittedly, fairly well implemented. You have a lock-on button; a basic three-hit combo; block and dodge



HE'S BEHIND YOU…
Arguably the best part of the game, stealth kills only happen rarely, but when they do they're worth the wait. All you need to do is find a nice little patch of mist – as here – use your Dark Gift to turn invisible, move behind him and then… ouch!

DID YOU KNOW? The first game in the series – *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain* – was released a whopping seven years ago on PlayStation and PC. It was also awful.

MEET FEAST

Travel to strange new lands, meet new people – and then eat them.



HYLDENS

These are strange alien creatures. Fry their collective asses – in clarified butter with shallots and porcini mushrooms.



DEMON SPIDERS

Larger than your average arachnids, such crawlers are legion in the prison level – luckily, they can be dispatched with ease.



HYLDEN PETS

These enormous beasts are terrifying – the main reason for this is because they cannot be killed. Ever. Run Kain, RUN!



THE SARAFAN LORD

Ah yes, the very fellow. He's actually a surprisingly easy boss to vanquish – it's just getting to him that might be tricky.



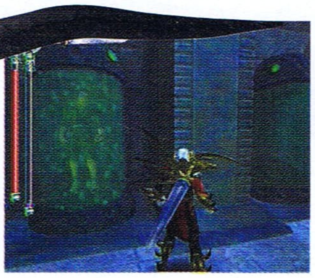


△ **The graphics are undeniably impressive in parts.**



△ **Here's Kain in one of his costume changes, preparing to assault the final big castle thing. Woo!**







△ **As you might have gathered, this is Not A Nice Man. He particularly has a thing about vampires.**

functions; and the capability of grabbing hold of someone and either chucking them around or giving them a good slap. A Rage Meter slowly builds as you block, enabling more powerful moves. There are a variety of weapons, each of which has signature moves when someone is within your chilly grasp, but they do wear out with use.

POWERS THAT BE

The most satisfying kills, though, (yes, we're aware that's a disturbing phrase) are those executed while cloaked in mist, an ability available from your initial clutch of Dark Gifts. If there's mist on a patch of floor, you can essentially become invisible on it. Walk behind someone, and when a skull appears ominously over them, strike. A rather gruesome animation cuts in, depending on the weapon you have equipped. It's the sort of thing that will make you grimace uncomfortably, before enthusiastically seeking another victim…

Other Dark Gift power-ups become available gradually, *Metroid/Zelda* style. These include the abilities to make huge long jumps, psychically control the weak human cattle, and even set people on fire. The thing is, unlike those games, there are no inventive ways in which to apply your new-found abilities. You can't experiment or return to previously unsolvable puzzles to see what treasures you can uncover – the rigid, utterly linear structure always remains intact. Regardless of the sheer number of dark, inviting doorways, there aren't really any secrets to find. It's essentially puzzle, fight, puzzle, puzzle, fight, puzzle, boss, repeat.

But its not all bad news – just not brilliant news, either. Aside from a few shaky laggage episodes and rare graphical glitches, the design is detailed and atmospheric, and – while it doesn't stretch the Gamecube to its limits – perfectly acceptable. The voice-acting, too, is actually rather good. There's plenty to like about *Blood Omen 2*, but equally, the flaws that are present drag the game down a little too much for our taste.

TOM MAYO

+

- Varied combat system.
- Tactical boss battles.
- A bloodthirsty episode in a sucessful franchise.

–

- Tedious linear puzzling.
- Does *every* game have to have stealth in it?
- No replay value, at all.

IF YOU LIKE THIS…

Blood Rayne
Majesco
NGC/75 70%
Make Nazi bacon in the Cube's only other vampire game.



8 VISUALS

Atmospheric enough, but dreary after long gaming sessions.

7 SOUNDS

Surprisingly good voice talent, in a way that's both cheesy and plummy.

7 MASTERY

Lovely touches, but not enough of them to warrant special mention.

5 LIFESPAN

A moderate challenge with plenty to get your puzzle teeth into.

VERDICT

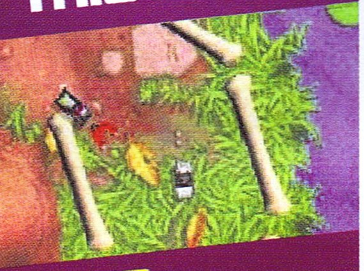
Buy it if you love the series, or if you love vampires. Don't buy it if you aren't entirely sure it's in the right vein. Ahahahaha.

NGC INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING

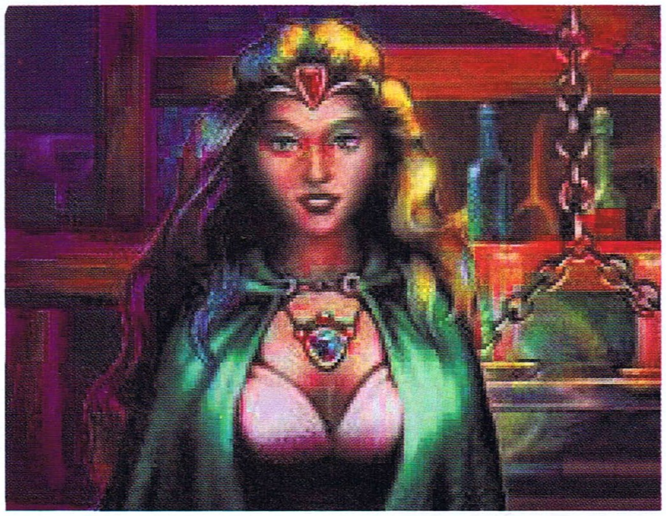
72

OUR PROMISE Although the main focus of **NGC** will always be Gamecube games, we take all Nintendo formats seriously – and that includes Game Boy Advance. So, every month we will cast our critical eye over a select band of the highest-profile GBA games available. If we score them highly, you'll know they're worth investing in…

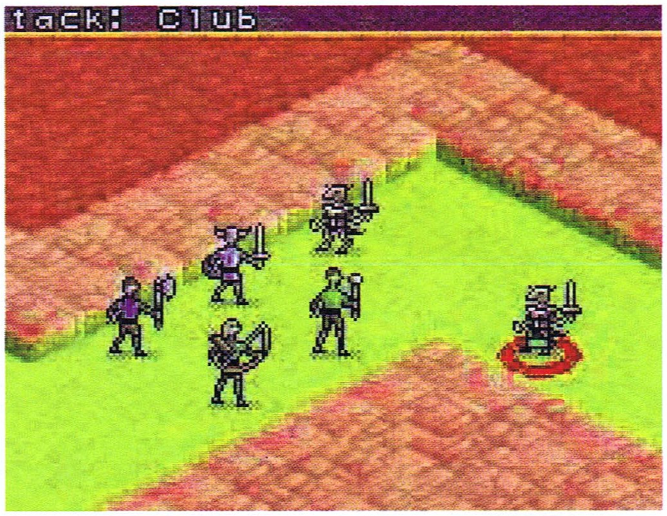
NGC GAME BOY ADVANCE REVIEWS THIS MONTH



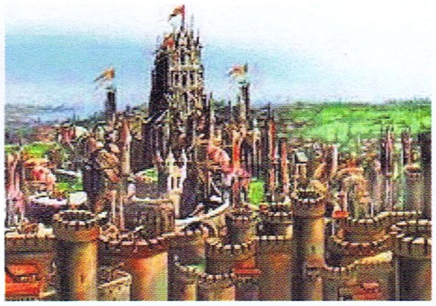




△ Hunt about a bit and you'll eventually run into an NPC or two. Some want to flog you stuff while others bolster your numbers by joining your party.



△ The combat screen kicks in the minute you encounter an enemy. It'd probably be an okay addition if only it didn't run so slowly.



△ Forget about ye olde plotte. Think of yourself as a hired gun, but with a sword. And spells.



△ You can move your characters into flanking positions but, beyond this, tactics are scarce.



△ The best bit is dungeon exploration, which is cleverly controlled just using the direction pad.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

INFO BURST

FORMAT	GBA
FROM	ATARI
PLAYERS	1
SINGLE-CART LINK UP	NO
SAVE	ON CART
OUT	NOW
COST	£30

More goblin-worrying, and the dullest battle scenes ever as the rotting corpse of *Dungeon Master* is resurrected…

Combat's the make-or-break factor of any RPG, and yet this simple fact seems to have bypassed developers Pronto games by a moon mile. While the battles of the PC original – launched way back in 1991 – were good, solid rucks that featured the ability to slam doors down onto enemy heads mid-scrap, the fights of this GBA reimagining are as brittle as a freeze-dried twiglet. Run into a gang of orcs, skeletons or zombies and the 3Dish maze world suddenly flattens out into a basic top-down strategic view. Then everything slows… down…

> "THE FIGHTS IN THIS GBA RE-IMAGINING ARE AS BRITTLE AS A FREEZE-DRIED TWIGLET"

The idea of missing an attack is one we all recognise. Even in the excellent *Golden Sun* there are times when an enemy's dexterity allows them to dodge a blow. But here, the rogue non-connecting shots are standard – at least to start with – while the Conan-style bone-shatterers are rarer than hen's teeth. All of which add up to enemy encounters that limp along while your uninspired stick-men miss again, and again, and again, and… zzzzzz.

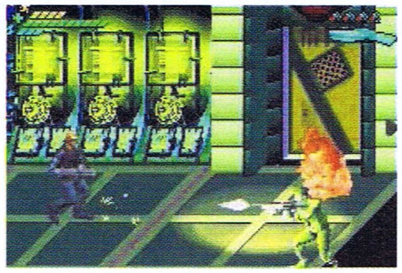
Things do improve a little as you start to acquire better weapons off the dead and build up your experience points but, here again, it all becomes muddled thanks to a useless interface. Now, there are menus in an RPG and there are MENUS. Take giving an item to a fellow party member. First, you've got to locate the character who's holding what you want to trade via a few taps of the R button. Then you have to identify the Inventory icon that leads you to a sub-menu entitled Trade Item, and so on. It wears your patience so thin that when the in-game puzzles finally start to arrive, you really can't be arsed to expend any energy on them.

Anything actually good about it, then? Well, the first-person exploration stuff is fast and convincing, the ability to design your own characters a cool extra, and the fact that there are over 80 spells for your magic users to get jiggy with means there's plenty of depth. Problem is, there are only so many RPGs you can afford to play in one lifetime and this, regrettably, isn't worth the 20-plus game hours it contains.

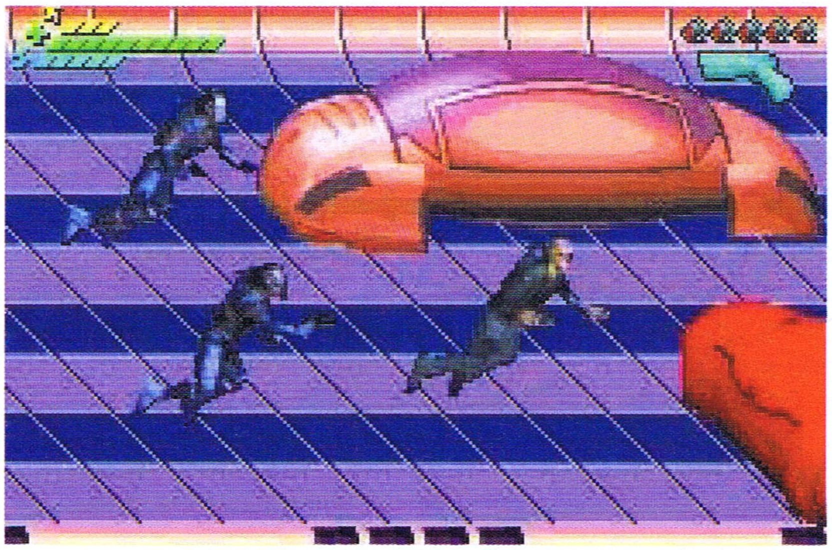
NGC INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING **41**



△ The lock-on system works just fine, as long as you're not facing multiple enemies.



△ Bigger weapons: tasty. Enemies that just charge directly at you: dull as it comes.



△ Yet more uninspired side-scrolling but, this time, with the unwelcome addition of a rocket pack. Fly me to the moon? Nope, just chuck me sideways until a Lexus turns you into roadkill.

MINORITY REPORT

INFO BURST

FORMAT	GBA
FROM	ACTIVISION
PLAYERS	1
SINGLE-CART	
LINK UP	NO
SAVE	ON CART
OUT	NOW
COST	£30

Cruise control without The Cruise… or the control.

Minority Report is a shocker from the minute the opening screens fall away. Taking control of a fast, but poorly animated, John Anderton you wander across ten goon-packed levels wasting anything that looks at you wrong. Which would be dandy, were it not for three fundamental flaws.

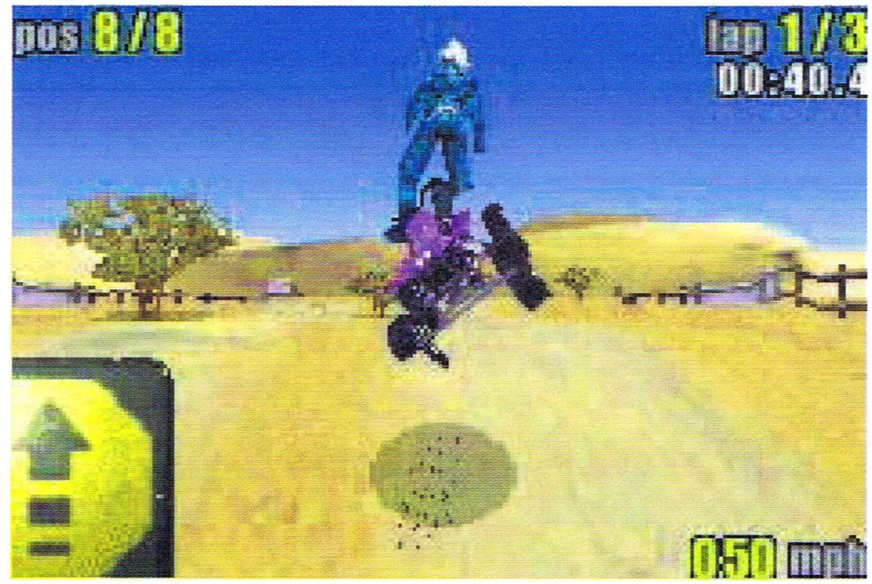
Flaw 1: Targeting. Press R to lock on to enemies. Press R again because you'll usually lock on to a civilian first. Mash R as enemies approach. Shoot civilian. Lose life. Bastards.

Flaw 2: Rolling into cover. Double-tap the direction you're facing to roll behind scenery. Breaking from cover with a double-tap the other way – another fumbling nightmare.

Flaw 3: Hitting aerial targets. Gangs of hover-bots mean you die quickly today, yes? Why? Because even when you're lined up for a decent pistol-whip you'll end up swiping air.

If you have the dedication to keep playing after that, be our guest…

NGC 26



△ Hit a Super Jump power-up and you (yes?) erm… jump higher. Fine if there was a stunt-based point system but, in a game that's all about racing, it does nothing but slow you down. Bad design.



△ A rare moment of opponent AI leading to (ooh the tension) a risky coming together of tyres.



△ The only place the brown power-ups stand out is on the snowy levels, which take ages to unlock.

ATV: QUAD POWER RACING

Prepare for quad damage as this tedious mud skipper bottoms out.

INFO BURST

FORMAT	GBA
FROM	ACCLAIM
PLAYERS	1
SINGLE-CART	
LINK UP	NO
SAVE	ON CART
OUT	NOW
COST	£30

Another one that's leaving us colder than the meat section at Iceland.

It's an 'into the screen' racer that replaces the customary ground-hugging automobile with the highly-sprung physics of the quad. Which, it has to be said, is this game's only saving grace. Over-compensate your turns while airborne and you'll quickly bounce out of contention. Stray into the mud at the sides of the track and you'll slow to a crawl. Good, realistic handling. And there's even a switchable camera that gives you two perspectives on the action. So no, it's not the actual racing that's sapping our will to live. It's everything that surrounds it.

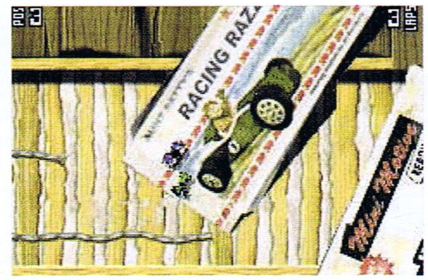
The power-ups are brown and, get this, there are two of them that boost your speed. A third – the Super Air – beefs your height on jumps but, in a game where there's no trick-points-for-boost system, it instantly becomes redundant. Not only that, but there are just three types of bike to unlock, each carrying four attributes (Speed, Acceleration, Suspension and Tires) that you can't upgrade. Sweet Jiminy! Grab your handlebars tight and steer clear of this rancid little toad of a racing game. Avoid, please.

NGC 36

"Despite the respray, this is still a vintage roadster"



△ There's little that can touch the diabolic satisfaction of twatting a real-life opponent out of contention.



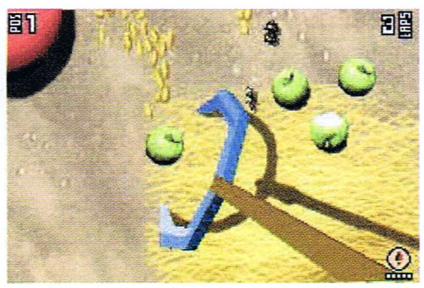
△ It'll take you a few attempts to learn the track.



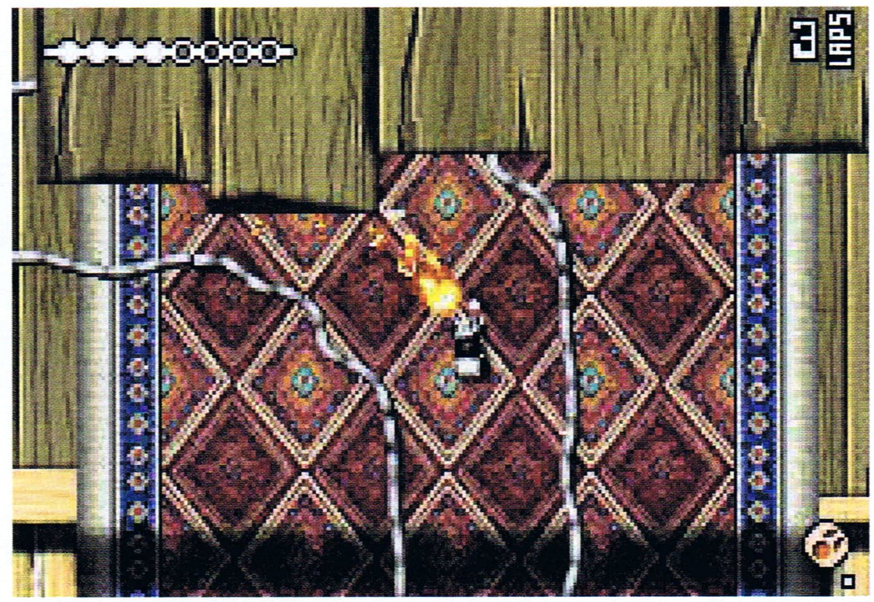
△ You can stray out a bit before your car is reset.



△ In a scrap? You can kiss first place goodbye.



△ The apple barn is the first track you'll see.



△ Making out track markings on a small and visually busy screen regularly leads to unnecessary resets.

MICRO MACHINES

INFO BURST

FORMAT	GBA
FROM	ATARI
PLAYERS	1-4
SINGLE-CART	
LINK UP	YES
SAVE	ON CART
OUT	NOW
COST	£30

Small is beautiful but *Micro Machines* still ain't the Kylie of karting.

Got any fond memories of the bubble-headed drivers of *Micro Machines V3* – arguably the finest hour for the series? Then you'll feel right at home with this scaled-down version. From the Danger Ranger – think a porky Buzz Lightyear – to frail old Aunt Betty on her vintage motorbike, this has all the character appeal that made the original game so great. Things have been removed from the classic set-up – such as the ability to construct fan-boy sized collections of vehicles – but, for the most part, this *is* the old M and M exactly as you remember it.

First up – with a topical nod to Old Uncle Saddam – weapons of mass destruction. *Micro Machines* has always taken whacking the opposition out of contention seriously, and no more so than here. Old favourites like the fender-mounted boxing gloves, frying pans and pincers return alongside a flurry of new road killers. Bubble traps, freeze bombs, electro rays, grenade launchers… the list goes on, as does the spread of options that are available to you once you get past the intros.



△ Races are tough and it takes real dedication to open up the later levels.



△ On the physics front, steering a boat is a world away from driving a bike or car.

If you're after a nifty fix, try Quick Race, while Championship mode allows you to customise victory conditions by limiting the number of opponents, or by offering you a knockout or cup route to domination. Fancy a more violent day at the races? Then Bombtag turns all the courses into destruction derby arenas where the object is to hold on to the bomb for as long as you dare. Get blown up and it's nil points and an instant restart in your face.

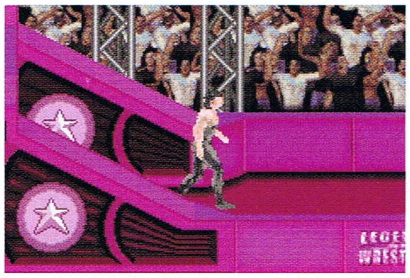
So initially, everything seems as it should be in the *Machine* room. Then you hit the overly sharp brakes and realise that, despite the respray, this is still a vintage roadster. For all its charm the game remains resolutely 2D and the time needed to master all the tracks, and get the most out of your four pitiful lives, is way too long. There are ways to boost your chances of survival – collect all the on-screen letters and trade them for extra lives – but it's a tactic undermined by an on-track location system that varies from lap to lap. It's a move that makes hitting anything useful a perpetual game of chance that results in way too many forced restarts and not enough structured reward.

The multiplayer modes do offer salvation in the fact that they cater for both single and multipak link modes, but you'll need to find four mates willing to condition themselves to the way *Micro Machines* plays to really set the competition alight. Which isn't to say this is anything but a solid karter. It is. It's just that, for the same amount of money, *Mario Kart* does everything *Micro Machines* does, only a lot better.

NGC INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING **68**



△ Run, run to the turnbuckle as fast as your micro-legs will carry you, then frantically bash out the combo that allows you to climb. The result? Three guys in swimwear sitting on your head.



△ Hold down the A-button and you can quickly whip through the sluggish entrances.



△ With a control system this sticky, successful combos are the result of blind luck.

LEGENDS OF WRESTLING

INFO BURST

FORMAT	GBA
FROM	ACCLAIM
PLAYERS	1
SINGLE-CART	
LINK UP	NO
SAVE	ON CART
OUT	NOW
COST	£30

It's easier to herd jelly than pull off a moonsault in this.

It may have Hogan in it – albeit before his recent 'Hollywood' resurrection. It may have 39 other classic faces from the history of the WWF, WCW and British wrestling – whoa, Big Daddy! It may have a well-structured career mode that sees you touring the States while tackling title bouts and the fluctuating of popularity with the fans. It may even have a clever reversal system that triggers off a golf-style swingometer with hit zones that vary in size depending on your chances of turning the tables. But all of that amounts to nothing if you can't climb up onto a turnbuckle and piledrive an opponent through the canvas.

The wrestler controls are shocking and they leave you perpetually on the defensive rather than encouraging any flair in the grappling action. Landing punches and kicks is relatively easy, but try to pull off a rope move (especially when you're facing in the opposite direction) and you're left frantically tapping the buttons while your opponent pins you in yet another submission hold. As far as control systems go, this is about as responsive as a tortoise in a fridge. Which is a shame as a lot of work's obviously gone into the game, with details such as unique attacking moves for each wrestler and audience feedback really setting the scene. It only makes the shoddy fighting system all the more difficult to understand.



NGC 39



△ The speed Tarzan swings through the screens at means his loin cloth is always jungle-fresh.



△ Okay, so water kills me right up until the point where I'm forced to swim. Logic be damned!



△ The log slides do freshen the prolonged platforming, but the appeal wears off the minute they suddenly finish above lethal pools. Die like this six or seven times and you'll start to go bananas.

TARZAN RETURN TO THE JUNGLE

INFO BURST

FORMAT	GBA
FROM	ACTIVISION
PLAYERS	1
SINGLE-CART	
LINK UP	NO
SAVE	ON CART
OUT	NOW
COST	£30

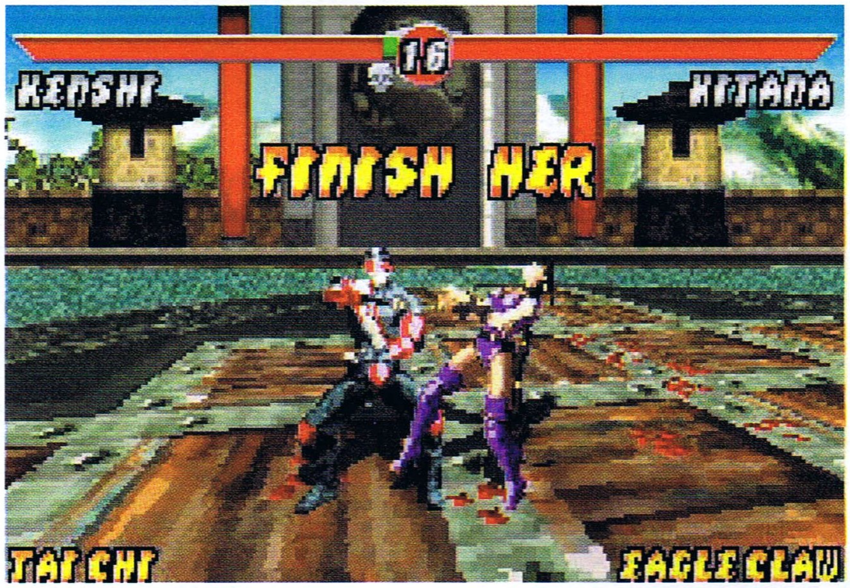
King of the swingers? Nope, nor the jungle VIP either…

What would Tarzan do if he had one of those 'can't-be-arsed' days? He'd probably lounge in his hammock for a while, take a swing down to the river, then meet up with Jane for a few Um Bongos. Attractive propositions, especially when faced with yet another dull, side-scrolling platformer. Actually, that's a bit harsh, as *Return to the Jungle* does offer plenty of scope when it comes to leaping around.

As far as vine connoisseurs go, there are few that can beat Tarzan. He can swing on them, slide down them, monkey bar along them, use them as bungie ropes to gain height… And it's all animated with an ape-like grace. The kicker is the way you get him to perform these feats of agility. For longer bounds you need some speed, via the B-button. But, to leap into the air, you need to then press the A-button while running – a bad design moment where you find your index finger creeping round to help out. Bearable, as long as you're not involved in the split-second timing of the deadly vine slides. A couple of unjustified deaths later, and you're wondering if Jane might be up for a night on the town…

NGC 52

"The fatalities are so basic, they're not worth the effort"



△ If you squint your eyes and paint the GBA screen, it looks almost like the Gamecube version. Almost. Good to see that there's plenty of the old vein-claret flying around, though. Aaah, bless.

MORTAL KOMBAT DEADLY ALLIANCE

INFO BURST

FORMAT	GBA
FROM	MIDWAY
PLAYERS	1–2
SINGLE-CART LINK UP	NO
SAVE	ON CART
OUT	NOW
COST	£30

Midway's ripping yarn thumps onto Game Boy Advance.

Anyone unlucky enough to have spent money on the sickeningly bad *MK Advance* could be forgiven for running a mile at the sight of this one.

And while this stripped-down *Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance* is in a completely different league to the previous diabolical game, it comes as no surprise to find that it's far less enjoyable to play than the full-size Gamecube version (reviewed on page 38).

Almost half of the characters have been removed, along with most of the frames of animation. The controls have been cut down to fit onto four buttons, and the fatalities are so basic, they're not worth the effort.

Compared to the best 2D fighting games, it's way too easy to win by hammering away with one or two moves. The graphics are much like *Tekken* on GBA, and look pretty ugly next to something like *Street Fighter Alpha 3*. As far as GBA fighters go, a top-notch conversion of *Mortal Kombat 2* or *MK Trilogy* would have been a better bet for Midway.



NGC 58



△ Soooooo, reckon they've got to fight, then.



△ It's just like the nineties all over again. Yes.



△ If football were two dimensional, pixellated, wholly virtual and featured animals, it'd be this.



△ Go on fatty – give 'im a shove. Go on. GO ON. Oh, for goodness' sake. Call yourself a pro, etc?



△ We've been gypped, and no mistake. Where are all the Disney characters, hmm? And not the bit-players – the bigwigs, the nauseatingly cute ones we've all come to know and put up with. Eh? Eh? Eh?

DISNEY SPORTS FOOTBALL

INFO BURST

FORMAT	GBA
FROM	KONAMI
PLAYERS	1–2
SINGLE-CART LINK UP	NO
SAVE	ON CART
OUT	NOW
COST	£30

The cartoon sports game Walt froze his head to play.

We criticised the Gamecube version of this last month because it barely had any Disney characters in it, and on the GB Advance there are even fewer – just six of them, in fact.

But the game actually seems better suited to the handheld than it is to a console, and trimmed down to a quick blast of five-a-side action, it's every bit as much fun as most other GBA sports titles.

The passing and dribbling controls work well, with a difficulty curve that means you'll thrash the early teams while learning some skills, before the better sides you encounter provide a sterner challenge.

Each team chooses one magic item such as a super shot or a speed boost, which can be activated whenever it's needed. Winning tournaments unlocks further items, and these can be kept for later use or transferred to the Gamecube version via a link cable.

In all, *Disney Sports Football* is easy to play, not bad to look at, and will keep young gamers busy for a while.

NGC 78

"The plot zaps along like an episode of Eastenders"

WEAPONS
You'll find that your foes in Zelda are inevitably better equipped than you, but you don't need to fight hard to make progress – just fight smart. Perhaps it's time to put that boomerang to better use, young adventurer?





SWORD
Just as Arthur is nothing without Excalibur, it's only by claiming the Master Sword that Link can break the curse laid over Hyrule by the evil wizard Agahnim. Not that we're trying to give away the plot or anything.



MURK
These lamps can be lit and then carried with you on your dungeon visits, so remember to make a note of where they are. Especially as they serve a handy double purpose of fending off rats and other such undesirables of the night.

POTTERY
It sounds ridiculous, or at least a like a cheesy scene from Ghost, but rummaging under the unusually plentiful dungeon pottery will unearth all sorts of health-and-wealth bonuses, as well as the odd secret lever.

MAP
Despite its size, Zelda never intimidates the player. Tap the L-button and you'll not only bring up a world map, but the location of your next task will be marked with a red X. And though it doesn't always pay to head straight there, it does mean you'll never get hopelessly lost.



ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST

Something old, something new. All Zelda…

INFO BURST

FORMAT	GBA
FROM	NINTENDO
PLAYERS	1–4
SINGLE-CART LINK UP	NO
SAVE	ON CART
OUT	NOW (US)
COST	£30

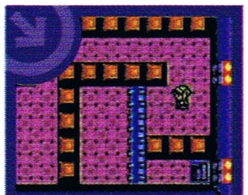
NGC STAR GAME

Every *Zelda* release is special. Just as some people measure their life in terms of football seasons or what they were doing when JFK died, every Nintendo fan worth their food seasoning will have been waiting for *A Link to The Past* and *Four Swords* for nearly a year now. And it will have seemed longer.

But this cart's only half-new. *A Link to The Past* is a straight conversion of the 1993 SNES game of the same name, while the original part of the package, *Four Swords*, is a multiplayer-only adventure. And a multiplayer-only adventure where everyone must have their own cart at that. But fear not – you'll find no trace of *Mario Advance*-style disappointment here. Because just like every other *Zelda* before it, *A Link to The Past/Four Swords* proves very special indeed.

Let's deal with *A Link to The Past* first. Because no matter how good the original was – and it was *embarrassingly* good – converting a ten-year-old game to a new console is a risky business, as anyone who's unlocked the patchy SNES tracks on *Mario Kart Super Circuit* can attest. And when you first boot up *Zelda: A Link to The Past*, you can't help thinking that Capcom could have done a bit more visually.

But that's where the criticism ends. The genius of the Zelda games



PLAYING AWAY
***A Link to The Past** is yet another example of how Nintendo outsourcing games is paying dividends. Two years ago who'd have thought Capcom would be entrusted with the first multiplayer Zelda? After that team's success with Oracle of Ages/Seasons, too, we can only wonder what's up their sleeves for the first original GBA epic.*



ONE FOR HYRULE, AND HYRULE FOR ONE

The **NGC** muskahounds take on the first ever multiplayer *Zelda*. And do okay…



BAD TO THE BONE
The skeleton heads that chase you around take on a whole new context in Four Swords. All you need is a voice shouting, "Elf Warrior is dying!" and you'd be playing Gauntlet.



PULL TOGETHER
The puzzles you'll encounter in Four Swords demand constant co-operation. Often it takes the form of you literally all pulling together in order to get on, as pictured here. Heave!



PUSH OVER
At other moments, a more subtle linking of Links is what's required. You'll have to use items such as the Magnetic Gloves to be able to get one of your retinue over ravines.



MONEY GRABBING
Although the knock-over-pottery mechanics of ALTTP are the same, the four-player context changes things. Now you're all competing for the same money and hearts.



△ ***A Link to The Past's*** **plot is true to the original's.** ***Four Swords*** **sees you face the sorcerer Vaati. All new – all evil.**



△ ***A Link to The Past*** **is a quality SNES remake you'll want to play and play.**





△ **Chicken meet Link. Link, chicken.**



△ **The first of** ***Four Swords'*** **four dungeons is a sprawling tutorial-type world that'll get you co-operating nicely.**



△ **Four players, four coloured Links. But no other characters to be, alas.**



△ ***Four Swords*** **is co-op, but the Link with the most Rupees gets a treat.**



△ **All players have total freedom to wander. Or do a Genesis impression.**

has always been in their balance. *A Link to The Past* is a huge 30 hours-plus adventure but it never feels intimidatingly big. Whether you're a games novice or geriatric you'll be able to play it. The plot zaps along like an episode of *Eastenders* with princesses being sacrificed, evil alternate universes opening up, and new tasks to test you every time you so much as blink. While the action itself is inspired, there are always new areas to discover, new characters to talk to and new baddies to battle.

SNESLESS THINGS

Want examples? Well, in true *Indiana Jones* style, **NGC** found themselves in The East Palace searching for the Pendant of Courage. Well actually, we found ourselves ducking huge bubbles, duelling with odd elephant-creatures in the dark, being chased by giant shurikens, getting trapped in a room full of skeletons and – yes – even scrambling around for levers to open secret doors and stuff. Make no mistake, *A Link to The Past*, is an intense, almost mythical experience.

Unless you've played it before, that is. For if you're after something at all different from the SNES version, then you're going to have to round up some equally dedicated friends and get stuck into the *Zelda*-goes-multiplayer *Four Swords* adventure.

Surprisingly, the multiplayer aspect doesn't alter things as much as you might expect. It's still the same boulder-chucking, pressure switch-stomping, statue-dragging gameplay – just that now, because there are up to four of you, these things must be done simultaneously. For example, at one point one of your number will find a Link-shrinking Gnat Hat that enables the wearer to squeeze through tiny tunnels to open previously inaccessible doors. Ingenious stuff, although at more than one point the image of four Links all fighting over rupees made us recall ancient coin-op *Gauntlet*. In a good way.

So while there are minor gripes (why isn't at least a part of *Four Swords* single player? Why didn't we get a new *Metroid Fusion*-type adventure?) they're besides the point. Like *Mario Advance 2* and *Yoshi's Island* before it, *Zelda* may have one foot in the SNES, but it's still an essential GBA title.

Like we said at the beginning, the arrival of a new *Zelda* game is always special, and this bundle is Nintendo's own way of welcoming you to 2003. Enjoy it.

SCOTT ANTHONY



SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Aside from the smaller playing screen we've yet to find a single significant difference between the SNES version of A Link to The Past and the current GBA incarnation. True, an extra dungeon has been added, but you'll need to complete the Four Swords adventure to play it.

+
- Two huge adventures.
- Ace multiplayer addition.
- Painfully addictive.

–
- Half SNES update.
- Other half requires four mates with carts.
- Dated visuals, natch.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...
Zelda: Oracle of Seasons/Ages
Nintendo
NGC/57 5/5
Two great adventures on two tiny GBC carts.



6 VISUALS
They do the job, but next to *Metroid Fusion*, a little disappointing.

8 SOUNDS
The *Zelda* theme adds atmosphere aplenty, but Link's yelp may annoy.

9 MASTERY
Two games polished to perfection by Capcom. Awesome achievement.

9 LIFESPAN
30 hours each. So even if you know *ALTTP*, it's still 30 hours of fun for £30.

VERDICT
One of the best SNES games ever, and a startling new multiplayer game. This is an essential GBA purchase.

NGC INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING

92

"It's an Origin of Species with a Nintendo-ish twist of simplicity"



△ Exercise time. Tongue points let you 'eat and run' – tear the meat flaps off a living creature without first having to stun it.



△ That doggy isn't a very friendly one. And note the position of our creature, halfway off the screen. Thanks, camera.



△ Master of all he surveys. We wandered around in this bonus mountain zone for the allotted five minutes and only saw one other creature. Which promptly vanished in the long grass. There's a puzzle element here, for sure, and that elusive animal must have some super-tasty meat.

CUBIVORE

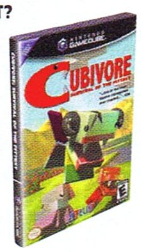
Welcome to the really wild show. It's kill or be killed, mate and mutate, in the strangest thing on Gamecube…

INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	SARU BRUNEI
PUBLISHER	ATLUS
PLAYERS	1
MEMORY CARD PAGES	13
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	NO

WHEN'S IT OUT?
Out now in the States, with no UK date. As with *Animal Crossing*, a PAL release seems unlikely.

COST: $50



GET INTO THE GAME
Your first baby steps in the world of *Cubivore*.

KILLER INSTINCT

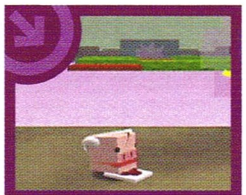
With a piggy head, no teeth, and only one meat flap, the day your creature becomes King of the Cubivores seems an awfully long way off. To get ahead, you've got to get ruthless, and that means clamping some squealing, weaker beast between your jaws while you rip bits of meat from its body. Harsh, but fair. Press the left shoulder button to target something, then hit A to pounce. When your meal has been stunned, hold down on the analogue stick to end its life and fill your belly.



Did anyone catch that Great Britons series on BBC last year, where wise viewers voted Princess Diana 'better' than Charles Darwin? Obviously she used to look a bit nicer in jodhpurs or a ball gown, but how much influence did she ever have on computer games? None, that's how much. She was rubbish.

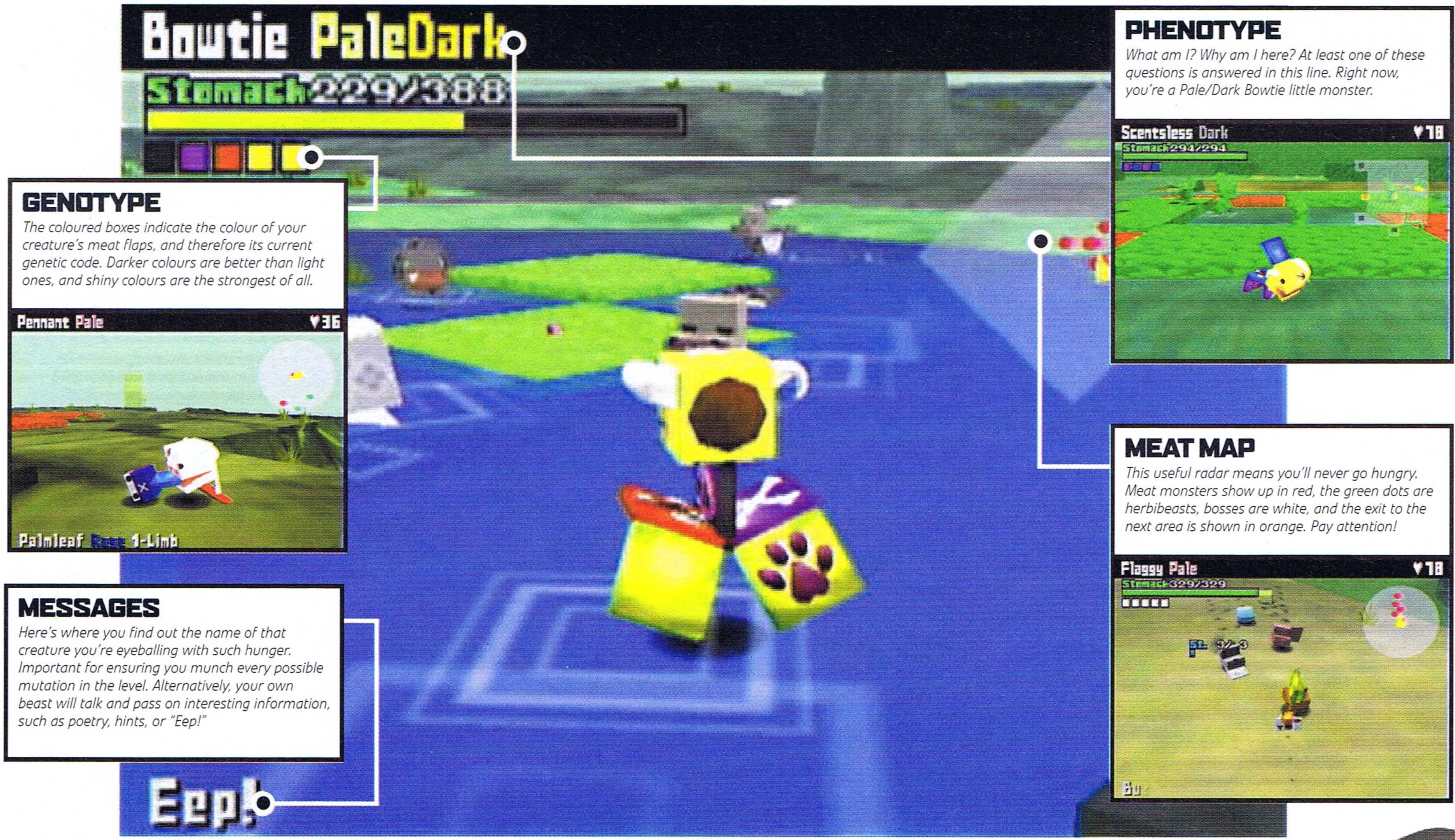
Anyway, as all educated people know, Darwin was the man who invented evolution, along with lots of other stuff like birds and mammals. Without his sterling work we'd still be eating lice out of each other's fur instead of waiting six months for a reservation at Jamie Oliver's young offenders' institute, and sniffing arses instead of thinking of chat-up lines.

And we certainly wouldn't be playing anything as crazy as *Cubivore*, which is a



WILDERNESS

No beast can venture in the bleached white areas where the colour has all been drained. Eating wilderbugs restores the wild in these barren patches, breathing life back into the land and generating creatures for your hungry cubivore to devour. After that, all you need to do is get busy with those razor-sharp jaws.



PHENOTYPE
What am I? Why am I here? At least one of these questions is answered in this line. Right now, you're a Pale/Dark Bowtie little monster.

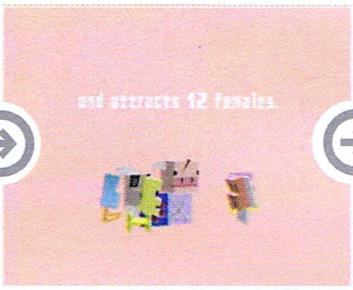
GENOTYPE
The coloured boxes indicate the colour of your creature's meat flaps, and therefore its current genetic code. Darker colours are better than light ones, and shiny colours are the strongest of all.

MEAT MAP
This useful radar means you'll never go hungry. Meat monsters show up in red, the green dots are herbibeasts, bosses are white, and the exit to the next area is shown in orange. Pay attention!

MESSAGES
Here's where you find out the name of that creature you're eyeballing with such hunger. Important for ensuring you munch every possible mutation in the level. Alternatively, your own beast will talk and pass on interesting information, such as poetry, hints, or "Eep!"

HI, GIRLS!
Get some Raw-Meat, find a love tunnel, and wait for the ladies to start sniffing around. The more impressive your creature looks, the more females it will attract, and the more babies you can choose from for the next generation. The original beast… dies (sob).







"THE MEATY NEW DNA COURSES THROUGH YOUR CUBIVORE'S VEINS UNTIL IT TURNS INTO THE VERY BEAST YOU JUST TORE TO SHREDS"

kind of Origin of Species with a Nintendo-ish twist of simplicity.

It's all about evolution. You get born, you run around killing things. Life is good. You carry on killing lots more stuff until you bump into something that's a bit harder than you. Then you have to mutate to survive, or you'll be next on the menu.

Unlike the real world, unless Darwin got it completely wrong, you evolve by eating things. The animals in *Cubivore* are made up of a head and between one and six meat flaps (square panels), giving a total of 150 increasingly bizarre configurations. When you spot one that looks like it might be pretty tough, the only way to find out is by consuming its meat flaps. The meaty new DNA then courses through your cubivore's veins until it turns into the very creature you just tore into shreds.

This is often where you find out that your new form actually walks backwards or slithers sideways, making attacking anything quite a tricky proposition. Some mutations are, without a doubt, completely useless.

But they can all be powered up by eating yet more meat. You see, there's more to this evolution lark than simply filling your belly.

PLEASED TO EAT YOU
In this game, you are what you eat. Literally. And as there are different types of meat to consume, so there are different quality grades. Pale meat is the worst – it won't do you much good at all. Dark meat makes you stronger and tougher, and then there's rage meat, which is the finest cut of them all. As your creature breeds and dies, growing an extra meat flap with each new generation, evolving into the ideal form becomes more challenging. You have to keep eating meat of the same colour, as well as keep paying attention to the quality. A carefully planned evolution can be ruined



DOING THE DOO
Every so often you might eat something that disagrees with you, or at least doesn't fit in with the colour scheme you're building. When this happens you can press Z to unleash a cleansing 'doo', thus expelling all traces of the last colour you consumed. Feels better, doesn't it?

DID YOU KNOW? Atlus, the US publishers of *Cubivore*, don't have a great record when it comes to releasing games in the UK. Anyone in this country remember *Snowboard Kids 2* and *Ogre Battle 64*? No?

"The real joy comes from seeing how your latest mutation will behave"

WALKING WITH CUBIVORES

Animal magic in the cubist jungle. With Kenneth Branagh.

THE BIRTH

As a new day dawns, so new life is born. A force that embodies the hopes and dreams of the wild. Beautiful and pure, it exists so that the essence of creation may be perpetuated. It grows. It changes. It multiplies… good Lord, it multiplies. Its square head and single, flap-like limb will be passed from generation to generation. Diversity, the future.





THE AWAKENING

As the beast marks its territory, other inquisitive creatures arrive on the scene. Perhaps hoping to bask in the glory of this cubic anomaly, their curiosity is aroused. Playfulness is a natural trait in the land of the cubivore. The spectacular colours indicate that these glorious specimens may well be ready to mate. What wondrous offspring would they…

WHAT COMES NATURALLY

No! No! Good Lord, it cannot be so! The beast exists only to destroy. To terrorise. To maim and mutilate, devouring everything of beauty until nothing remains. The fury that burns inside it compels the beast to kill, to kill, to kill again. The scratching and the biting! The claws and the fangs! The horror that is nature…





BIT BY BIT

Most terrifying of all is the beast's capacity for learning. It absorbs knowledge from the things it eats. How can this be? Could the monster's prey impart wisdom with its dying breath? Do unsuspecting animals divulge a lifetime's experience as the beast rips and gnaws at their living meat flaps? Driven by unseen hands, the beast appears to train itself.

A MATCH IS MET

The first law of nature states that no matter how strong a beast becomes, there are always deadlier others. Monstrous as he is, our creature cannot hope for victory if he fights such a behemoth. And the second law of nature dictates the hierarchy of combat: Thou shalt not have a go at something with two more meat flaps than thyself.





THE MATING GAME

Aware that his future lies in evolution, the beast searches for a mate. A task that would be simpler had he not already cleansed the jungle of most living things. But his quest is not in vain, for soon he chances upon the source of life itself – the love tunnel. After a short time, 12 children are conceived, of which one will be chosen to continue the line. Life will prevail.



△ This monster walks backwards, but it's absolutely hard as nails. Master its reverse attacks and you'll annihilate the boss.



△ That thing behind is called a Beastruction, and it's the hardest six-limb creature in the game. Run away! Run away!



△ Roll around the Rampage Bowl to get a better scar on your animal's head. The bigger the scar, the tougher the creature.

when your creature wolfs down several pieces of meat in one go, inadvertently swallowing a bad colour. Fortunately, it's possible to follow a diet plan that restricts your cubivore's feeding to one flap at a time.

This monumentally bizarre game does have a point – you're aiming to become King of the Cubivores so your creature can get it on with the ultimate female. She won't even look at any animal that hasn't made at least 100 mutations, so you have to plot a path through the levels, figuring out which creatures to eat, and in which order, so as to maximise your mutations before arriving at the final encounter.

Bosses bar the way between levels, each containing special Raw-Meat panels that boost your creature's natural abilities. For example, Raw-Bone improves defensive moves, and Raw-Schnoz makes your creature blend in with the background – for stalking plant-eating herbibeasts, obviously.

THE MAIM OF LIFE

That the actual process of fighting isn't particularly amazing comes as no great surprise. It's a bit like an RPG, insofar as you prepare an attack (by mutating into an animal you think will have an advantage), have a go, and then watch with elation or disappointment as the damage numbers rise from your opponent's head. It's all in real time, though, and there isn't much to do apart from run around, press the button, and defend from time to time.

The real joy of the game comes from seeing how your latest mutation will move,



LOVE BUG

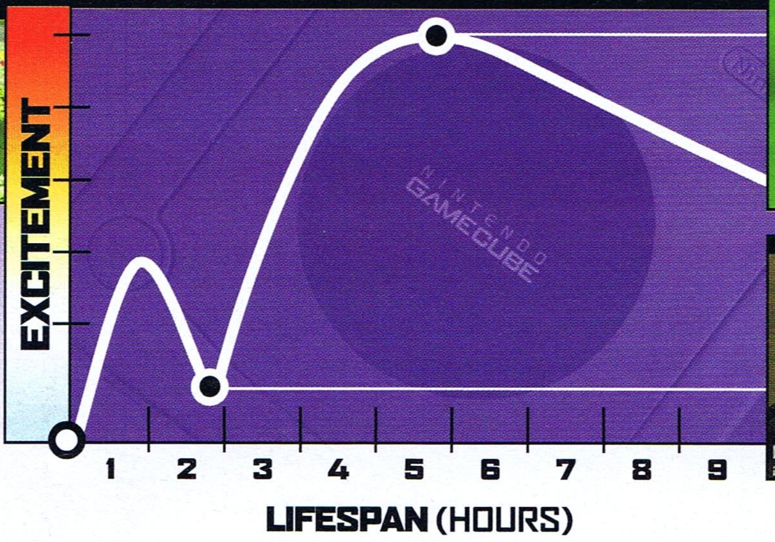
Sometimes your animal isn't as fertile as you might expect. Even though he has no trouble pulling ten or more females, only half will actually bear children. The way to remedy this embarrassing situation is to collect love bits. When you get 100, they'll get knocked up just from looking at him.

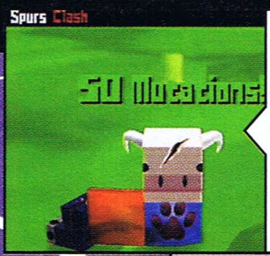
DID YOU KNOW? *Cubivore* is known as *Doubutsu Banchou* (or *Animal Leader*) in Japan, where it was published by Nintendo. Originally intended to be an N64 game, it was rescheduled for Gamecube a couple of years back.

NGC EVENT-O-METER
The highs and lows of life as a cube…



Get over the shock of the way it looks and you'll find an unusual game with real substance here. As long as the dire camera system doesn't put you off within the first half hour, there's a decent challenge to be had with *Cubivore.*

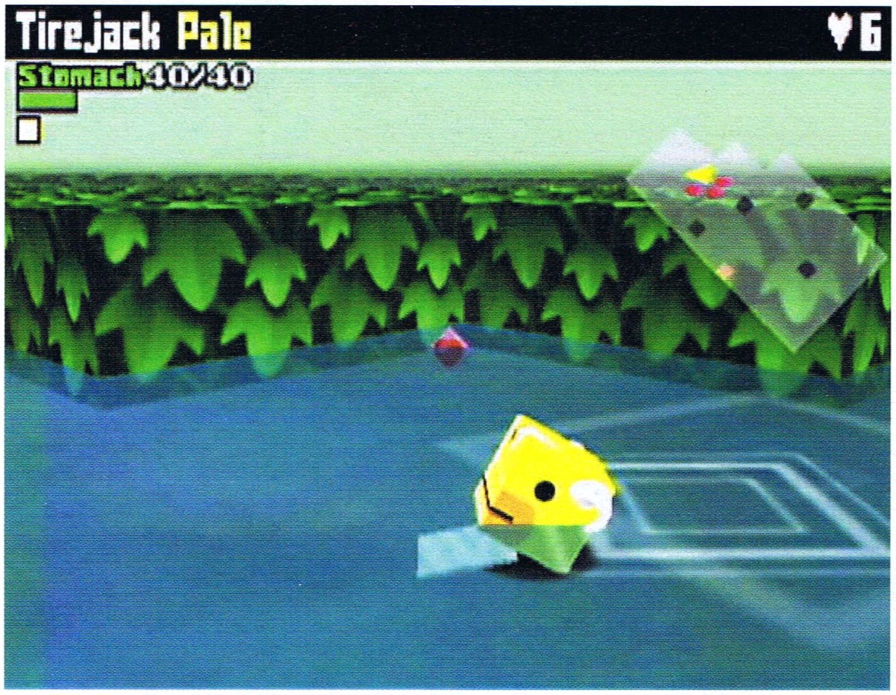




HIGH POINT
Top of the tree
Fully loaded with meat flaps, horns and teeth, you've got the most fearsome animal on the plains. Now to get the missing mutations.



LOW POINT
Is it worth it?
The rubbishness of the camera and the attritional nature of the early combat make it tough going at the beginning. It's worth the trouble.



△ Square ripples in the water. There are no soft curves or rounded edges in this cubic world.





△ The love tunnel is blocked once your beast has had his wicked way. Then it's time to start fattening up your new creature.



△ More Beastructions! Head for the hills while you can still walk.

react and control. The animation is simply fantastic – each individual cubic animal flips, hops and crawls around the spartan landscape in unique, believable ways. At least, if real animals were made of boxes and squares, this is exactly how you'd expect them to move.

The visual style works very well, even though it's barely updated from the original, cancelled N64 version. Unfortunately, some of *Cubivore*'s graphical appeal is ruined by what is certainly the worst camera system we've seen in years.

And since you have to operate the camera even more often than you do in a Mario game, there's no getting away from its awfulness. It moves in short steps, so you can't just hold the C-stick to spin around for a better view. You have to keep tapping and releasing the stick, which gets seriously annoying after about 30 seconds of play. When your creature ventures close to a high object, which happens all the time, the camera rises up and gives a thoroughly useless view pointing directly downwards. There's no look-around function and you can't zoom in or out to get a better look at the layout of the area. It's a complete nightmare during fights, as when you're getting attacked by more than one animal, you always lose sight of your own creature because the camera has a tendency to focus on your opponents.

There's no reason the developers couldn't have fixed this, and the game really suffers because of this simple technical gaffe. A shame, since it's still a lot of fun while it lasts, and is one of a kind on Gamecube or any other console. Collectors of the weird and wonderful should check it out.

MARTIN KITTS

> "SOME OF CUBIVORE'S GRAPHICAL APPEAL IS RUINED BY WHAT IS CERTAINLY THE WORST CAMERA SYSTEM WE'VE SEEN IN YEARS"



E-Z MUTE
Mutations are arranged in categories according to how many meat flaps your animal has, and what its current form is – pig, bear, bird or something else. Having collected enough mutations of a particular type, it's possible to switch between them at any time by pressing the D-pad. Saves having to kill things.

+
- Unique visual style.
- Great humour and a cracking translation.
- Amazing creatures.

–
- Awful, awful, awful camera system.
- Combat is too basic.
- The worst camera ever.

IF YOU LIKE THIS…
Animal Crossing
Nintendo
NGC/74 90%
Masterful blend of trading, chatting and weirdness.



7 VISUALS
Good abstract art, or bad N64 graphics? A question of personal taste.

7 SOUNDS
Acoustic jazz performed by 'live' musicians. The animal noises are good.

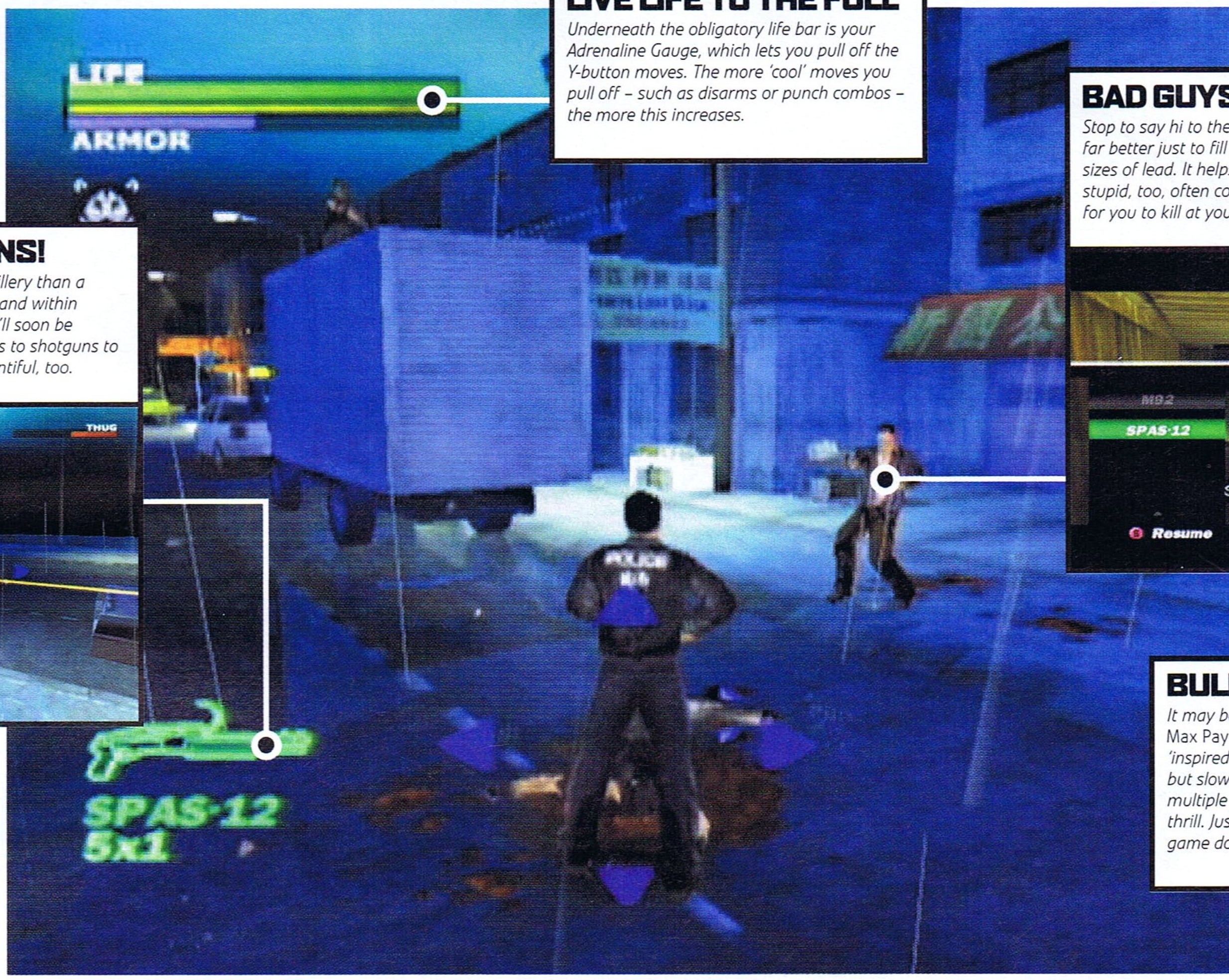
5 MASTERY
A truly fantastic concept, with too many technical camera/control howlers.

7 LIFESPAN
Easy to 'finish', but it'll take ages to discover all 150 mutations.

VERDICT
A spectacular piece of Japanese strangeness. See it to believe it, and if you can ignore the camera (unlikely), you might love it.

NGC INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING
76

"Namco's third-person shooter owes a huge debt to Mr Payne"

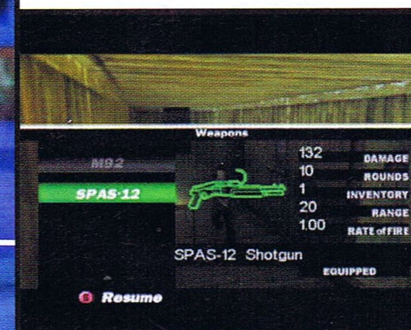


LIVE LIFE TO THE FULL

Underneath the obligatory life bar is your Adrenaline Gauge, which lets you pull off the Y-button moves. The more 'cool' moves you pull off – such as disarms or punch combos – the more this increases.

BAD GUYS

Stop to say hi to the bad guys if you want, but it's far better just to fill their bodies with different sizes of lead. It helps that they're remarkably stupid, too, often considerately standing around for you to kill at your leisure.



GUNS, GUNS, GUNS!

Dead To Rights *features more artillery than a secret Iraqi underground bunker, and within seconds of a mission starting you'll soon be switching from bare fists to pistols to shotguns to fully-automatic Uzis. Ammo is plentiful, too.*



BULLET TIME!

It may be ripped off wholesale from Max Payne *– which in turn was, er, 'inspired' by scenes from* The Matrix *– but slowing down time and taking out multiple foes at your leisure is still a thrill. Just hold down Y and let the game do the rest.*

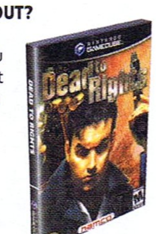
DEAD TO RIGHTS

Man and dog working together in perfect harmony. Turning bad guys to pools of blood and entrails. Just like God intended.

INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	NAMCO
PUBLISHER	NAMCO
PLAYERS	1
MEMORY CARD PAGES	10
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO

WHEN'S IT OUT?
Out in the States as you read this, but no word of a UK release just yet…



COST: £40

Can we just say… *Max Payne*? You know, the PC hit that came packing the novel invention of Bullet Time (think those bits in The Matrix where everything slows down)? Can we say that Namco's third-person shooter owes a huge debt to Mr Payne, being that a large factor of its attempts at individuality stems from being able to slow time down to dispatch bad guys at leisure?

Actually, it's not totally fair to say that *Dead To Rights* apes *Max Payne*, as the title also references the latest Die Hard instalment, the crime-and-vice elements of the hard-to-avoid *Grand Theft Auto* franchise, and the secondary-sidekick feature in *Starfox Adventures*. Hell, the lead character even looks suspiciously like 80s throwback Ryo from Sega's epic cat-scaring game, *Shenmue*.

All of which means that *Dead To Rights* is more a collage of contemporary gaming trends than a piece of positive 'game art' in itself. But is it a decent enough title in its own right? And is it fun to play?

Well, sort of. In your quest to seek and kill your dad's killer (hello again, *Shenmue*), you control Jack Slate – a loose cannon of a cop – and venture through murky city streets and building sites, taking out the usual copious quantities of bad guys and even solving the odd puzzle. Such as hotwiring a giant digger to smash down a barrier, or finding a key. For a door.

Unfortunately, these mild deviations from the straight blasting action only serve to take the game down a startlingly linear path. Just as playing Bond in *Nightfire* brings home the impression that you're merely making your way from one predetermined cut-scene to another, it's the same with the set-pieces here. It's almost as if the developers decided that a straight blaster wouldn't offer enough depth – yet guiding the player by hand hardly inspires adventure and exploration. You're told where to go and what to do, which is fine for the action films *Dead To Rights* so wants to be, but simply promotes boredom here.

DOGGYSTYLE

And then there's the dog. Named Shadow, in certain sections you get to go canine and control your suspiciously wolf-like dog assistant. Yet his role is underused, and seems like a random afterthought. For



MINIGAMES

Every so often the third-person rooting-and-tooting action gets broken up with a short puzzle sequence. Here, you have to unpick a lock to hotwire a truck. Wow. There's also a dancing game to play – although it doesn't run in time with the music, and the dancer twitches spasmodically rather than actually 'dancing'…

DEAD TO RIGHTS

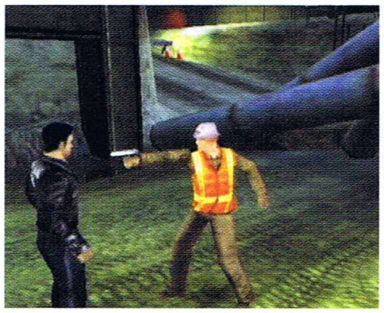
What if Max Payne had a dog…?



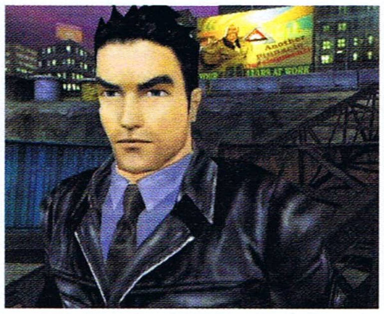
△ When you remove an enemy's facial features with a shotgun, there's a nice spray of claret.







△ Jack Slate – a man who shows no emotion at all, even when he's been shot in the eye.



△ In the game, enemies often mistake Jack for stammering pop robot Gareth Gates.



△ Helpfully, most enemy guards sport easily identifiable day-glo waistcoats.

ALL THE RIGHT MOVES

The boy Slate, does whatever a spider can. Possibly.



WALL FLOWER

There's nothing Jack Slate likes better than to pop his head around corners and crack one off between the eyes of a bad guy. Whack!



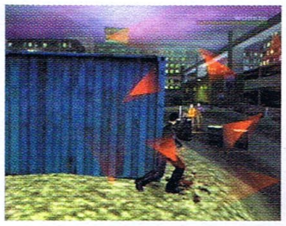
MULTIPLE HITS

Tapping the R-trigger lets you flit between enemies, meaning it's a piece of bullet-laden cake to take out multiple targets.



UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

Deft use of the context sensitive X-button sees Slate knocking weapons out of the grip of foes.



DON'T SHOOT!

Hostage situations? Slate's got it locked. Sneak up and use one of those evil guys as a human shield to halt his compadre's fire. Nice.



HAND JOB

No gun? Can't be bothered to disarm a foe? Don't worry, Jack can get tasty with his fists, dealing out at least three different types of punch! Wow.

instance, at the end of chapter two Jack gets shot by the latest suspect. As you lie injured on the ground, you can't help but wonder why Shadow doesn't rush in and take out your attacker. Presumably he's been tied up to a lamppost somewhere, which begs the question: why include him in the first place?

> **"JACK SLATE LOOKS SUSPICIOUSLY LIKE 80S THROWBACK RYO FROM EPIC CAT-SCARING GAME SHENMUE"**

TALK TO ME, BABY

However, if you accept that game speech is forever going to be an excruciatingly inferior inbred cousin to proper film dialogue – and even the best examples suggest so – then at least Namco have endowed Jack with lines so cheesy as to be entertaining. "Justice may not be smart, but it should be honest," he drawls. To a strip club 'waitress': "This place is about to get deadly. And for God's sake put some clothes on." Factor in a villain by going my the moniker of Boris Knockov, and you're in B-movie wonderland.

Thing is, every time the title verges on asserting its own personality on you, something else is referenced. The first major showdown scene – a strip club – seems only included to pander to the *Grand Theft Auto III*-worshipping hoi-polloi. Then there's a short 'rhythm' game to play, before heading off to smash a fire alarm to empty the club before facing off against some cronies. But how much better would it have been to have to creep through a heaving dancefloor with a silenced pistol or knife, silently taking out guards and thugs, while citizens bust out the funky chicken?

All of which doesn't mean *Dead To Rights* is a bad game. Far from it – there are plenty of guns, and there's more bloodshed than at a haemophiliac body-piercing convention. It's just that it's all too easy, too linear, and, sadly, too much of what we've all seen before. And that ain't right at all.

PHILLIP MLYNAR



DOG DIRT

The use of Shadow is a disappointment. Far from being a heroic Lassie-esque assistant – hell he's not even the Littlest Hobo, really – his use in the game feels forced, so the Jim Belushi-style canine camaraderie fails to ever catch light.

+

- Guns, and lots of them.
- Blood, and lots of it.
- Action, and lots of it.

−

- Shoddy animation.
- Very short.
- Chronic lack of originality.

IF YOU LIKE THIS…

James Bond 007: Nightfire
Eurocom
NGC/75 72%
Far from perfect, but it still beats this.



6 VISUALS

Jack isn't too bad, but there are some clipping problems elsewhere.

6 SOUNDS

Good hammy voice-acting, but the music is pretty lacklustre.

5 MASTERY

Compared to Ninty's own titles, it's far from pushing the envelope.

4 LIFESPAN

15 levels – all a cinch. And the bonus games offer little incentive.

VERDICT

Bog-standard action adventuring featuring a bog-standard implementation of previously seen game mechanics.

NGC INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING

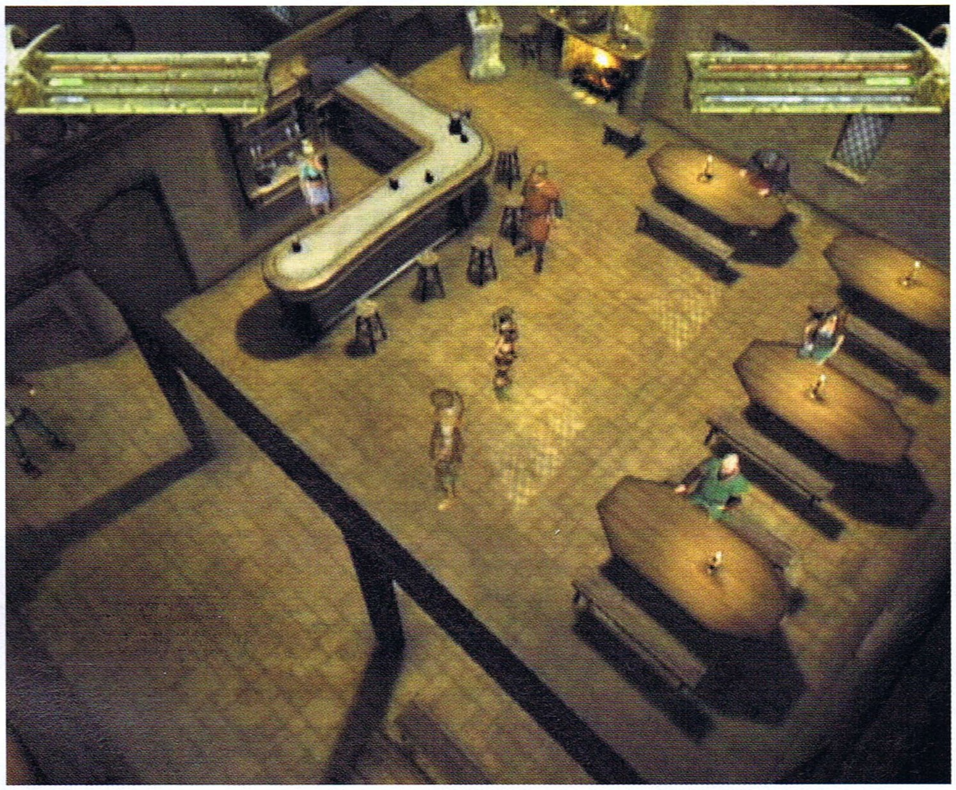
64



Coo. Who's the mysterious stranger? Best listen to him.



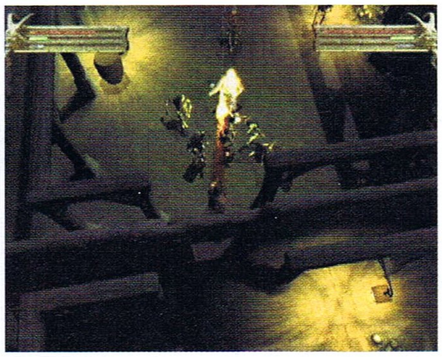
Items are made obvious when they're dropped by enemies.



Ah, the Elfsong Tavern. The first act revolves around this place, and it also contains a gruff chap who'll sell you shiny new weapons and buy your booty. There's also a dribbling drunk who seems to have no purpose at all.



Huh. Two spells at once. Give the great ninny a smack with your axe just for showing off.



Basic spells can be improved as you gain levels, so they don't become obsolete.

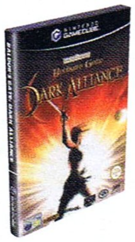
BALDUR'S GATE DARK ALLIANCE

Adventurers required. Skeleton bashing experience preferred. Must supply own sword, helmet and beard jokes.

INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	SNOWBLIND
PUBLISHER	VIRGIN INTERACTIVE
PLAYERS	1–2
MEMORY CARD PAGES	14
GBA LINK-UP	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO

WHEN'S IT OUT?
It's out now! Now now now now now now now! Now! In the US, at least.



COST: £40

Some things just don't deserve the social stigmas attached to them. Take beards, for example. Not only do they offer valuable facial insulation, but they also make the wearer devastatingly attractive. And while RPGs based on Dungeons & Dragons will do neither (as far as our rigorous reviewing methods have been able to ascertain), they certainly deserve to be taken on their own merits.

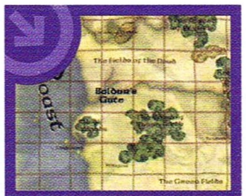
Which is tricky in this case, for *Dark Alliance*'s history, which has culminated in this appearance on the Gamecube, has been eventful. See, this is a port of the game which appeared on PS2 last year, which was itself inspired by the complex and very traditional PC RPG series, so there's plenty to distract the hapless reviewer.

But more on such comparisons later. Here's what you really need to know: developers Snowblind (ably guided by RPG experts Black Isle) haven't let the ludicrously complex D&D rule systems spoil the real fun of role-playing. *Dark Alliance* is an axe-swinging, fireball-flinging romp which favours non-stop combat over manual-poring. Picking one of three characters to be your plucky hero, you skip happily into the city of Baldur's Gate only to be sucked into a plot of dark scheming, evil beasts and, inevitably, bearded men.

The first few minutes are deceptive: a little idle chatter in the Elfsong Tavern with an impossibly proportioned barmaid might suggest that a life of odd jobs involving rats and cellars beckons, punctuated perhaps by a game of dominoes. But no. Underground you must go, where the beasties await, and the quick-fire real-time combat is a panicky affair at first. But soon, with just one button to deliver attacks and one for spells and feats, your only worry is treatment for that RSI in your right thumb. But in a good way.

Aside from advancing the linear plot, all that fighting earns you experience points and gradual advancement through a level system which distills the essentials from D&D. Combat feats such as Bull Rush, or spells like Magic Missile, line up along bonuses to health and fighting skills. Equally, you'll be able to expend cash (collected from dead beasties and from hawked weapons) for better equipment – all of which is necessary, because progression brings you into contact with increasingly fearsome foes.

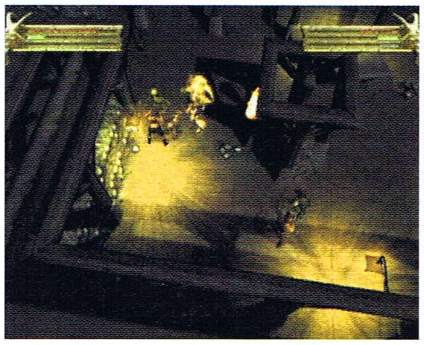
There's better variety than in most RPGs, too, with the action moving through cellars, sewers, icy mountains, forests, caves and crypts, with appropriate denizens in each.



WHOSE GATE?

Don't be put off by the bristly ancestry of the Baldur's Gate series. Though this has its roots in the stat-filled PC series, it does away with most of the number-crunching to focus on lots of combat. So don't worry if you don't know your THAC0 from your +1 Bastard Sword: you won't need to consult the manual to work out how to kill stuff.





BALDUR'S GATE: DARK ALLIANCE

Stat-free dungeon combat in the AD&D universe…



△ Fighting fire with fire will only burn down your house. Fighting the undead with fire, though, is a much better idea.



△ The water effects are absolutely gorgeous. Shame they didn't pay the same attention to the twitchy lighting.

CHARACTER WITNESS

Two's company, but three's a crowd.

1



Vahn is a bow specialist, and prefers to attack from a distance rather than get his hands dirty. The big wuss.

2



Kromlech's our favourite – a tough dwarf who likes axes and headlong charges. Don't spill his pint or make 'Get Shorty' gags.

3



Adrianna's more than a token babe: weak at first, her spells become spectacular later on, and she can swing a sword, too.

4



Two-player means you can concentrate on special abilities with the back-up of a friend. But there's no three-player mode. Bah.



△ "Can I buy whatever's under the bar, please? No… a bit lower…"



△ Boss encounters show a handy health bar. Not very D&D, is it?



△ Potions of Recall are essential, allowing you to skip to the act's central hub to complete quests, sell goodies or get out of trouble in a hurry.

Animation is a treat – particular favourites are the zombies, which can be gradually dismembered until the legless corpses drag themselves after you. But the visuals are a mixed bag: beautiful reflective surfaces (that'll be the specular bump-mapping, then) and marvellously rippling water don't sit well with occasionally glitching lighting. It's probably the least important result of the game's porting: more worrying is the fact you can only fit four saved games on a regular memory card. And surely if the game had been intended for Gamecube (or, for that matter, Xbox), you'd have been able to play co-operatively with three (or four characters) rather than just two.

While we're having a bit of a moan, there are a few moments when the level design starts to grate the nerves of the purist in us. Why, after seven levels of good old-fashioned dungeon hacking, the designers saw fit to plop down a few platform-style jumping puzzles is beyond comprehension. Thankfully, such occurrences are rare and most of the environments are suitably dank, sinister and (more importantly) sensible.

Role-playing has always been best with other people, though, and *Dark Alliance* is no exception. Its two-player mode requires close co-operation – the screen restricts you from running too far away from your chum – but that's no bad thing, as the game throws plenty more baddies at you if you're in a pair. The entertainment factor is definitely raised if you've a like-minded fellow player, as you're always fighting to help your fellow adventurer rather than just plodding along on your own. Indeed, the co-operative mode has brought back find memories of *Gauntlet*, *Golden Axe* and begging for just one more ten-pence piece from our mums.

The game's quest is a little on the short side, and there's only a limited replay value inherent in the options unlocked by finishing it – after all, you'll remember all the puzzles, set-piece fights and cut-scenes from your first run through. But while it lasts, and particularly in multi-player, *Dark Alliance* is a treat for anyone with pretensions to heroic fantasy adventuring. The classic 'just one more level' RPG lure is present and correct, as the rewards – more powerful weapons, spells and abilities – are not only worth fighting for but are also easy to weigh up and work out which you'll enjoy using the most – and that's a credit to the game's original makers. Best of all, there's not a hairy-footed ring-bearer in sight.

ROSS ATHERTON



GOOD VIBES

It's nice to see (well, feel) a game using the rumble device for a real purpose. When your health gets low, you start to feel your character's racing heartbeat, which means you really ought to think about quaffing a healing potion or two – far better than having to watch the little red bar. They've thought of everything, eh?

+

- Great co-op mode.
- Role-playing without the nonsense.
- Dirty great axes.

–

- A little repetitive.
- A technically disappointing port.
- Some frustrating design.

IF YOU LIKE THIS…

Lost Kingdoms
Nintendo
NGC/70 86%
About the only other RPG on the Cube, and well worth a look.



8 VISUALS
Great animation and effects, spoiled by glitches and fuzzy detailing.

9 SOUNDS
Good voice-acting and effects, and stirring, atmospheric music.

7 MASTERY
Not a great port, but nicely designed with a well-judged curve.

7 LIFESPAN
12 hours if you rush, but it's worth revisiting with friends in tow.

VERDICT

Ripping fantasy yarn that's a couple of fireballs from greatness. Simple and effective, but not as much fun on your own.

NGC INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING

80

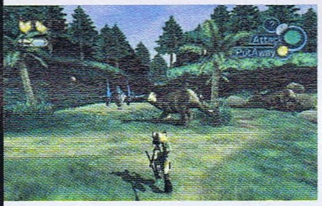
DID YOU KNOW? You can change your adventurer's appearance down to the last detail. Of course, this means you can make Adrianna wander around nearly naked. But we'd like to say that doing so is very, very puerile.

FIVE FOR A PRIZE!

Of course, we could easily sit around all day making Top 5 lists, like crazed list-addicted John Cusack. In fact, we often do. But, as ever, we want YOU to do the work now. You've seen the format over the past few months, so send in your own Top 5 lists. If we use yours, you might win something 'interesting'… Good luck, children! Mwahahaha…

TOP FIVE GAMING LET-DOWNS OF 2003

Looking forward to tip-top gameage only to feel like he's been kicked in the face is more than **Hugo Morris** from **Durham** can bear. His Top 5 wins him seven coloured testicles…



STARFOX ADVENTURES



MARIO PARTY 4



WRESTLEMANIA X8



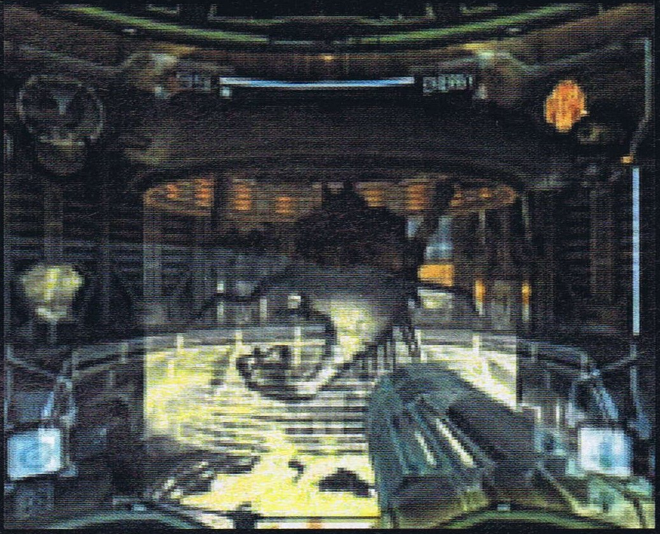
CAPCOM VS SNK 2



THE CLONE WARS

NGC ESSENTIAL

THE BEST CUBE GAMES MONEY CAN BUY…



1 METROID PRIME

NINTENDO ■ NGC/76 96

If you asked us a year ago where we thought *Metroid Prime* was going to rank on the list, we'd have scoffed cynically. As it turned out, the beleaguered Retro were shoved back on course by the guiding hand of Shigsy to create Gamecube's best game so far. Pushes the envelope in every field to produce a polished, eminently playable, stunningly immersive shooter that will make you cry when it's over. Classic.

NGC STAR GAME

2 SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE



NINTENDO ■ NGC/73 96

The wait may have been long, but by Mike was it worth it. This time, Mazza's cleaning up oily muck on a tropical island put there by an evil villain. With the same intuitiveness, polished visuals, and sense of pure fun, this pushes all the right buttons.

NGC STAR GAME

3 SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE



NINTENDO ■ NGC/68 95

Eye-singeing multiplayer battles, ingenious moves, brilliant cameo appearances from about every Nintendo character ever, plus some of the sweetest looks yet squeezed from the Cube – *Smash Bros* is everything you went purple for and more.

NGC STAR GAME

4 TIMESPLITTERS 2



EIDOS ■ NGC/73 92

A stonker of a time-travelling FPS with more than a whiff of *GoldenEye*, *TS2* crept out of nowhere to officially become Gamecube's finest example of the genre – and with *Perfect Dark* destined for the Bill Box, it looks as if it's here to stay.

NGC STAR GAME

5 WAVE RACE: BLUE STORM



NINTENDO ■ NGC/67 91

In PAL form this sodden sequel might suffer from some *tiny* frame-rate problems, but it's still a fabulous racer, replete with *the* most incredible water effects ever. Fast, dynamic, accessible and sublime to control, *Wave Race* is absolute magic.

NGC STAR GAME

6 LUIGI'S MANSION



NINTENDO ■ NGC/67 90

Mazza might have been late to the party this time round, but brother Luigi managed to ease the pain with this fantastically playable combination of *Super Mario World* and Ghostbusters. It's maybe a bit short, but still ace.

NGC STAR GAME

7 RESIDENT EVIL



CAPCOM ■ NGC/72 89

The classic zombie-horror fear-fest recreated to take advantage of the Cube's superior electrical witchcraft. Stunning, mesmerising visuals, unrivalled atmosphere and a brilliant storyline. Shame it still has the old-fashioned rotate-and-shoot control system from the dark PSone days, mind…

8 ETERNAL DARKNESS



NINTENDO ■ NGC/74 89

A rollicking Lovecraftian yarn of ancient evils coming home to roost that more than gives *Resi* a run for its money. *ED* replaces slick zombie-slaying action with a wonderfully creepy story told through a cast of 12 playable characters, and a truly innovative magic system. Get this one in…

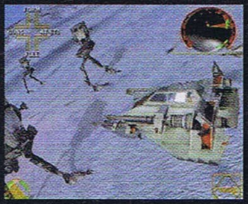
9 SUPER MONKEY BALL



SEGA ■ NGC/67 **88**

Ingenious update of *Marble Madness*, with simians rolling around strange landscapes trying to collect 'nanas. Chuck in a monkey version of *Mario Kart*, pool, some golf and a tilting boxing ring with springy boxing gloves and you've got the weirdest, most wonderful Gamecube game out.

10 STAR WARS: ROGUE LEADER



ACTIVISION ■ NGC/68 **87**

One of the best-looking console games ever made (well, so far), *Rogue Leader* also happens to be one of the slickest, most memorable Star Wars games of all time, bolting eye-popping renditions of the Battle of Hoth and the Trench Run onto silky smooth space battles. Get it in now.

11 TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3



ACTIVISION ■ NGC/67 **87**

It's clearly a no-brainer of a PS2 conversion, but *Tony Hawk's 3* is so good it hardly seems to matter. Packed with unbelievable grinds and stunts, backed up by a mountain of hidden extras, and benefiting from vast skate parks, if you haven't tried *Hawk's* on for size before, now's the time.

12 SSX TRICKY



EA SPORTS ■ NGC/69 **87**

Like *Tony Hawk's*, this has got PS2 written all over it in big, fat neon letters, but it still manages to perform wonders with your Cube. Fast, spectacular courses, brilliant shortcuts and secrets and some timely mid-piste scrappage make this conversion brilliant, *brilliant* entertainment.

13 BURNOUT



ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67 **86**

On the N64, we had to wait three years for a driving game. Now we've got a killer racer from day one: with lightning-fast, spectacular crashes, inch-perfect handling and one of the smoothest, most impressive engines around, *Burnout* is a dream of a game, even if it's over a bit quickly.

14 LOST KINGDOMS



ACTIVISION ■ NGC/70 **86**

Nerdy CCG-ing comes to the Cube in this surprisingly accomplished RPG, in which you collect cards and battle mythical monsters in pretty fantasy landscapes. Might not sound like much, but *Lost Kingdoms* is far more than the sum of its parts. Try it and you just might get hooked.

15 PIKMIN



NINTENDO ■ NGC/69 **85**

Dreamily created using textures from Shigsy's own garden, *Pikmin* is a genius real-time strategy with multi-coloured vegetables, beautifully simple controls and expansive, tactile worlds. It's over a bit quickly if truth be told, but don't let that put you off: this is Nintendo brilliance.

16 TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 4



ACTIVISION ■ NGC/75 **85**

The world's only skateboarder to be eligible for a Senior Citizen's Railcard (he's 35 this May…) stars in yet another boarding game. No time limits (hurrah!) and some great RPG elements and minigames complement the larger areas – a sterling refinement of an already classic series. Top hole, dude!

17 EXTREME G 3



ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67 **85**

A bit of an underrated gem, *Extreme G 3* offers pulse-shattering speed, huge, sprawling, well-designed tracks, some ingenious – and surprisingly tactical – weaponry and eye-spanking visuals. It's a tiny bit soulless, and the multiplayer's somewhat rank, but this is good stuff.

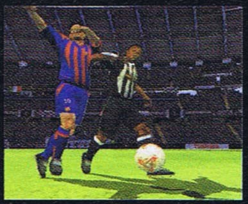
18 ISS 2



KONAMI ■ NGC/68 **83**

This once-untouchable football giant makes its debut on Gamecube sporting a few nasty cuts and bruises, including a lack of pace, huge turning circles and 'sweet spots'. Even so, it still rates as a majestic example of footie in a disc, even though an *ISS* with faults is hard to stomach.

19 FIFA 2003



EA ■ NGC/75 **83**

Who woulda thunk it? The year Konami slip up with a below-par *ISS* also happens to be the one where EA pull a version of *FIFA* that's actually smooth, playable and well put-together. Okay, so they both got the same mark, but by EA's past 'efforts' this is top-notch gimmick-free footie action.

20 TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2003



EA ■ NGC/75 **82**

Cablinasian golf robot Tiger Woods gets his own game – perhaps surprisingly, it's pretty good, too. With its slick visuals, masses of game modes, and plenty of lush fairways and greens to play on, *Mario Golf* is going to have its work cut out. The best spoiled walk on Gamecube by a country mile.

TOP TEN GBA GAMES



1 ADVANCE WARS
A cute-looking turn-based strategy game it may be, but underneath is a frighteningly addictive, super-challenging masterpiece that'll hook anyone experiencing it. Frankly, one of the best games we've played.

2 SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 2
This slightly tweaked verion of the SNES classic boasts a massive game world and some of the tightest, most perfect level designs ever conceived. Stone-cold classic gaming. Ooh yeah.

3 YOSHI'S ISLAND
Stunning level design, fiendish puzzles and secrets all topped off with some beautiful pastel-shaded visuals. Another essential 2D platformer for GBA.

4 SUPER MARIO KART ADVANCE
Playing very much like the superb SNES original, you have to burn around multi-coloured tracks, dishing out justice with weapons. An excellent multiplayer title.

5 STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 3
An incredible conversion of one of the best fighters ever. A massive single-player, a brilliant two-player experience, and a wealth of other great modes. Unmissable.

6 BROKEN SWORD
A perfect handheld title for those long journeys. A gripping storyline, sharp, sarcastic dialogue, some sweet visuals and a more efficient control scheme. A great little adventure.

7 CASTLEVANIA HARMONY OF DISSONANCE
A little more accessible than its previous GBA outing, this has all the hallmarks of a classic *'Vania* title. Imaginative bosses, a steep challenge and highly atmospheric.

8 BALLISTIC ECKS VS SEVER 2
Hands down, the best FPS on GBA. An incredible technical achievement (given all of its effects), this is both easier on the eye and far more engaging than *Doom*.

9 GRADIUS ADVANCE
The best shooter available for GBA, and it's doubtful many will ever get close. Classic *Gradius* gameplay, with innovative levels and fantastic bosses.

10 GOLDEN SUN
A beautiful little RPG that, while a little clichéd, has a lovely story accompanying some genuinely innovative touches and smart dungeon design.

NGC DIRECTORY

Your at-a-glance guide to everything the GC has to offer…

HOW IT ALL WORKS

A little screenshot of the game in question…

Title, publisher, price, players, and where to find the review.



SHRIMP-A-THON 2049 — 30

BUMSOFT ▪ £50 ▪ 1-4 ▪ ISSUE 208

A bit like *San Francisco Rush 2049*. But with shrimps. And set in a futuristic Grimsby.

A brief outline of what to expect and whether you should consider it…



2002 FIFA WORLD CUP — 30

EA ▪ £35 ▪ 1-4 ▪ ISSUE 69

About as much fun as being told your parents have been crushed to death in a horrific car crash.



ACE GOLF — 74

EIDOS ▪ £40 ▪ 1-2 ▪ ISSUE 74

Enjoyable, relaxing sticksie-ball game that treads the middle-ground between fun and serious.



BARBARIAN — 70

VIRGIN ▪ £40 ▪ 1-4 ▪ ISSUE 72

A button-mashing fantasy battler. Fun for a while – but it's not as good as *Smash Bros*.



BATMAN VENGEANCE — 70

UBI SOFT ▪ £30 ▪ 1 ▪ ISSUE 67

Platforming cartoon bat-action. One of the first Cube games – looking pretty ropey already.



BEACH SPIKERS — 79

SEGA ▪ £30 ▪ 1-4 ▪ ISSUE 72

Brilliantly addictive with four players, but the single-player's longevity lets the side down.



BIG AIR FREESTYLE — 28

INFOGRAMES ▪ £30 ▪ 1-2 ▪ ISSUE 75

The kind of game that makes you want to cry the second you've started playing. Don't bother…

BEST IMPORTS



METROID PRIME

One of the world's few perfect videogames. Innovative, atmospheric and a joy to behold from start to finish.



ANIMAL CROSSING

This unique, surreal free-roaming title is the most charming, endearing game we've ever played.



ZELDA THE WIND WAKER

Stunning to look at, and even better to play. Once again, Nintendo deliver another magical experience.



CUBIVORE

Weird. Help your cube evolve into a six-limbed killing machine by mating, and munching on meat flaps.



SONIC MEGA COLLECTION

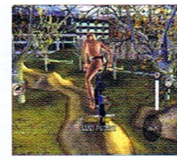
Seven Sonic games on one disc. Very retro, but fantastic fun if you're a fan of the series.



BLOODY ROAR: PRIMAL FURY — 74

ACTIVISION ▪ £35 ▪ 1-2 ▪ ISSUE 68

Competent-enough fighter, but *Capcom Vs SNK* and *Mortal Kombat* have since surpassed it.



BMX XXX — 48

ACCLAIM ▪ £30 ▪ 1-2 ▪ ISSUE 76

Childish BMX game featuring strippers showing you their nipples. Get a girlfriend instead.



BOMBERMAN GENERATIONS — 70

VIVENDI ▪ £40 ▪ 1-4 ▪ ISSUE 76

The single-player is enjoyable if a little tedious – four-player mode is as addictive as it ever was.



CAPCOM VS SNK 2 — 79

CAPCOM ▪ £30 ▪ 1-2 ▪ ISSUE 72

A great game, but purists will want to buy a decent arcade stick to get the most from it…



CEL DAMAGE — 60

EA ▪ £30 ▪ 1-4 ▪ ISSUE 66

Silly cel-shaded car combat game that's far too manic and confusing for its own good.



CRASH BANDICOOT: THE WRATH OF CORTEX — 40

VIVENDI ▪ £40 ▪ 1 ▪ ISSUE 75

One of the worst ports we've seen – of a game that was a stinking load of crap to begin with. Avoid.



DARK SUMMIT — 51

THQ ▪ £35 ▪ 1-2 ▪ ISSUE 69

Think *SSX Tricky* but with all the speed, style and entertainment taken out of it. A waste of time.



DAVE MIRRA 2 — 75

ACCLAIM ▪ £30 ▪ 1-2 ▪ ISSUE 67

Not bad at all. Slick and smooth with big arenas – but this will only appeal to the BMX hardcore.



DISNEY SPORTS FOOTBALL — 69

KONAMI ▪ £40 ▪ 1-4 ▪ ISSUE 76

Oddly enough, this isn't that bad. It's an amusing, simple footie game, ideal for younger gamers.



DONALD DUCK GOIN' QUACKERS — 32

UBI SOFT ▪ £30 ▪ 1 ▪ ISSUE 68

A bit like *Crash Bandicoot*, except with a duck in a sailor's costume. Oh, and it's also rubbish.

THE BEST MULTI-PLAYER GAMES

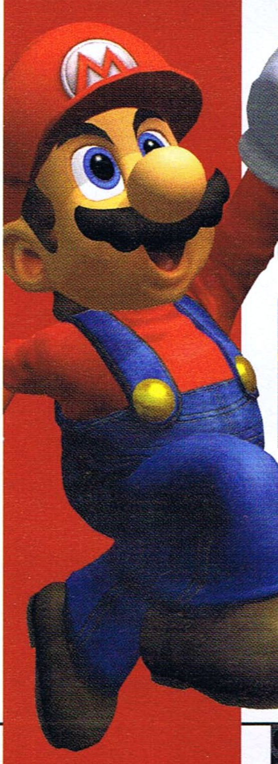
SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE
Still the most played game in the **NGC** office. With changeable rules, loads of challenges and intense four-player action, this will keep you going for ages…

TIMESPLITTERS 2
Awesome. Slick and very fast, with a massive range of characters, weapons and challenges, this is the perfect party FPS. Throw in a Mapmaker and you're looking at a classic.

BALDUR'S GATE
Two-player co-operation at its finest. You'd be surprised how many hours you and a mate can lose, hacking your way through dungeons, swapping armour and casting spells. One of our more recent favourites.

FIFA 2003
Arguably the, er, best footie game on GC! It's been so long since we've had a decent FIFA game pass through the office that we've relished the chance to get the most out of this one. Top stuff.

SUPER MONKEY BALL
Whether you take it in turns on the single-player or fight it out in the party games, this is essential to your collection.





DOSHIN THE GIANT — 62
NINTENDO ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 74
Quirky title that puts you in charge of a giant who must help indiginous islanders. A little short-lived.



DRIVEN — 60
BAM ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 68
Very basic, very short game of the appalling film. Filling up bargain bins worldwide as we speak.



EGGO MANIA — 49
KEMCO ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 72
Rubbish take on *Tetris* that wouldn't look out of place on an Amiga. Pointless in every way.



ESPN 2002 WINTER SPORTS — 37
KONAMI ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 67
Winter sports game combining button-mashing with timing and precision excersises. Very dull.



GAUNTLET: DARK LEGACY — 25
MIDWAY ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 68
We'd be far more comfortable with this travesty if we'd had it inserted rectally. Utterly despicable.



GODZILLA: DESTROY ALL MONSTERS MELEE — 68
INFOGRAMES ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 74
Lots of good stompy fun in multiplayer, but otherwise a little weak. Get *Smash Bros* instead.



HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS — 78
EA ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 76
Attractive and decent enough adaptation of the film – but rather easy. Only Potter fans need apply.



HOT WHEELS: VELOCITY X — 45
THQ ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 75
Very basic racing/car-combat game based on the toys. Strictly for the very, very young.



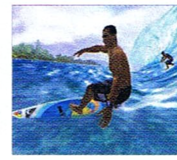
JAMES BOND 007: NIGHTFIRE — 72
EA ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 75
The best Bond game on GC so far, but tasty visuals can't hide an FPS that's a little lacking overall.



JEDI KNIGHT II — 67
ACTIVISION ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 75
A very disappointing PC conversion of an overrated shooter. Huge game, but quite tedious.



JEREMY MCGRATH SUPERCROSS WORLD — 20
ACCLAIM ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 68
Like a horrble nightmare about doing cross-country wearing nothing but wire-wool pants…



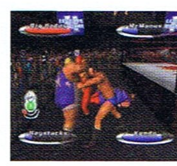
KELLY SLATER'S PRO SURFER — 75
ACTIVISION ■ £40 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 73
Same old trick-based extreme sporting, but this time in water. Actually quite good fun, for a while.



KNOCKOUT KINGS — 79
EA ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 75
If the more arcadey nature of *Rocky* doesn't sit too well with you, then it's worth giving this a go.



LEGENDS OF WRESTLING — 47
ACCLAIM ■ £35 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 69
The gimmick of bringing back old-skool wrestlers is nowhere near enough to make this any good.



LEGENDS OF WRESTLING II — 50
ACCLAIM ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 76
See above. A travesty of a wrestling game, made only marginally better thanks to Big Daddy.



MARIO PARTY 4 — 68
NINTENDO ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 75
Disappointing. It's not bad for party fun, but it's done nothing to improve on the originals.



MAT HOFFMAN'S PRO BMX 2 — 70
ACTIVISION ■ £40 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 75
Another decent enough extreme sports sim. Slicker than *Dave Mirra*, but with smaller, tighter arenas.



MEDAL OF HONOR: FRONTLINE — 74
EA ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 75
FPS set during WWII. Looks rather ropey in places, but it's atmospheric and highly enjoyable.



MICKEY'S MAGICAL MIRROR — 26
DISNEY ■ £30 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 73
A cruel form of torture as Mickey patronises his way through this hideous adventure. Rubbish.



MX SUPERFLY — 63
THQ ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 73
An MX game that handles like you're racing on the moon. The best of a very bad bunch, though.

DID YOU KNOW? In issue 30 of **NGC**, Dave Corbett of Norwich sent in a list of his five worst games. They were: *South Park, Waialae Golf, Clayfighter, Cruis'n World* and *Gasp!!*. Yes.

DIRECTORY

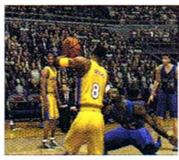
Every Gamecube game ever… rated!



MYSTIC HEROES — 71

THQ ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 75

Simplistic, repetitive 3D *Gauntlet*-style slash-'em-up that's strangely entertaining and charming.



NBA LIVE 2003 — 70

EA ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 75

The best basketball sim available, but it's still lacking somewhat. Strictly for fans only.



NEED FOR SPEED 2 — 69

EA ■ £40 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 74

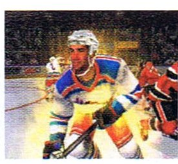
Slow and sluggish. Yet another lazy port that's ruined what was originally very entertaining.



NHL 2003 — 64

EA ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 75

A more realistic approach to ice hockey which, while decent enough, isn't particularly fast or fun.



NHL HITZ 20-03 — 65

MIDWAY ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 74

More frantic than EA's effort and a lot better for it. Not much change from the original, though.



PRO RALLY 2002 — 58

UBI SOFT ■ £40 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 74

An okay game completely dragged down by its awful, frustrating handling. Leave well alone.



PRO TENNIS WTA TOUR — 48

KONAMI ■ £35 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 74

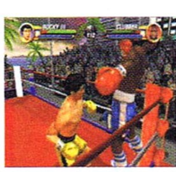
As bland an experience as you could get, with unresponsive controls and po-faced women. Dull.



REIGN OF FIRE — 59

BAM ■ £35 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 76

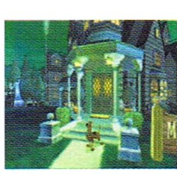
A poor game of a bad film. Some nice ideas are ruined by dodgy in-game physics and controls.



ROCKY — 78

RAGE ■ £40 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 74

A solid fighter based on the movies. With a great two-player and unlockable extras, it's a real treat.



SCOOBY DOO: NIGHT OF 100 FRIGHTS! — 36

THQ ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 75

Generic platforming action that has nothing to hold your interest longer than half an hour. Pointless.



THE SCORPION KING — 30

VIVENDI ■ £35 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 75

Bad. Very bad. Guide a poor approximation of The Rock around and hit bad guys over and over.



SEGA SOCCER SLAM — 67

SEGA ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 74

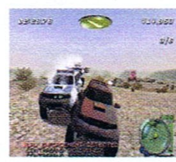
Footie with a focus on violence and OTT moves. Cracking in multiplayer – poor on your own.



THE SIMPSONS: ROAD RAGE — 52

EA ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 68

A very bad *Crazy Taxi* clone with nothing more going for it than repetitive 'funny' one-liners.



SMUGGLER'S RUN — 78

ROCKSTAR ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 73

impressive landscapes and fast-paced 'racing' are let down by repetitive gameplay and awful music.



SPIDER-MAN: THE MOVIE — 72

ACTIVISION ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 69

Dodgy control and camera issues are the only problems with this enjoyable platform adventure.



SPY HUNTER — 55

MIDWAY ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 68

Appalling frame-rate, nasty course design and dull linear racing make this one to avoid at all costs.



SPYRO: ENTER THE DRAGONFLY — 40

VIVENDI ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 75

Much like *Crash*, this is another shoddy port of a game that wasn't much fun in the first place.



STARFOX ADVENTURES — 72

NINTENDO ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 74

Disappointing adventure that's way too easy and linear. Not awful, but should have been far better.



STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS — 71

ACTIVISION ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 75

Enjoyable blaster set around Episode II – not as good as *Rogue Leader*, but still fun all the same.



THE SUM OF ALL FEARS — 25

UBI SOFT ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 76

So bad words can't describe it. The most technically inept game we've ever had the misfortune to play.

TOP FIVE HATS



JUD'S TANK HAT

OWNER: J LEE WEBB

Practical protection against blood when 'cleaning' civilians from your T34/85's path.



BOND HAT

OWNER: 007

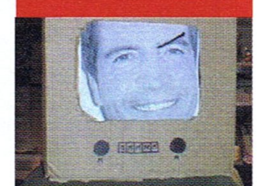
Well documented to enhance game-playing ability. Custom eyeholes improve visual stability.



FERTILITY HAT

OWNER: SHEDWARDS

If your frigid pigs won't rut, this gets 'em in the mood. Line up the swine and watch 'em go!



MMMM HAT

OWNER: MMMM

Five channels: M, M, M, M and M. Static image of M with erect eyebrow. Induces blindness.



WEEKEND HAT

OWNER: KITTSY

Frequent star of photo-fits west country-wide, this quality head-dress is scientifically proven to boost tramps' and childrens' running speed by up to 503 per cent.

DID YOU KNOW? The worst game we've ever played (well, apart from *Carmageddon 64*) was *Superman 64* on the N64. In it, Lex Luthor's maze was a series of rings you had to fly through – not a maze at all. Crud.

DIRECTORY

Every Gamecube game ever… rated!



TARZAN FREERIDE — 59

UBI SOFT ■ £35 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 67

Disney. Platformer. Do we really need to say any more? Workaday, unimaginative gameplay.



TAZ WANTED — 52

INFOGRAMES ■ £40 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 72

Some of the worst level design we've ever seen in this middling, frustrating cel-shaded platformer.



TETRIS WORLDS — 38

THQ ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 73

Again, THQ manage to ruin one of the best games ever by trying to make it 'better'. Get *Tetris DX*.



TOP GUN: COMBAT ZONES — 71

VIRGIN ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 72

The only game of its kind on GC so far. It's pretty challenging, but we recommend you try it first.



TUROK EVOLUTION — 71

ACCLAIM ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 73

Rather disappointing dino-hunting FPS sequel. Okay, but serious niggles let the series down badly.



TY THE TASMANIAN TIGER — 60

EA ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 76

As mediocre a platformer as you'll find. It's a solid example of the genre but nothing more or less.



UNIVERSAL STUDIOS — 24

KEMCO ■ £30 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 67

Awful. Anyone who makes a game that has you picking up rubbish deserves to be shot in the face.



VIRTUA STRIKER 3 V2002 — 55

SEGA ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 69

Nice to look at, horrible to play. Rubbish AI and unwieldy controls make for a crap game of footie.



WORMS BLAST — 63

UBI SOFT ■ £35 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 74

Kinda like *Bust-a-Move* in a puzzly-action kind of way, except this isn't anywhere near as good.



WRECKLESS: THE YAKUZA MISSIONS — 51

ACTIVISION ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 75

Drive around like a lunatic and smash up cars and everything else that gets in your way. Nonsense.

FIVE N64 GAMES WE WANT ON GC

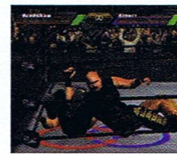
PILOTWINGS 64
Startling on its N64 release, the Gamecube could really make this wonderful game sing.

SHADOW MAN
Huge, sprawling and spooky. A visually improved version would be a welcome addition.

BODY HARVEST
Multiple vehicles, RPG elements, huge aliens and total mayhem. We want more. Much more.

SILICON VALLEY
Body-snatch a variety of animals. Sheer brilliance.

GEX 64
The visuals! The sound! How we miss the glory days of platforming…



WWE X8 — 70

THQ ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 72

Okay wrestler, but with nothing particularly new and a way-too-familiar engine. Still, if you must…



X-MEN: NEXT DIMENSION — 55

ACTIVISION ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 75

Duller than dishwater. Fighting-by-numbers stuff that offers very little of interest.



ZOOCUBE — 50

ACCLAIM ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 71

Insane puzzle game involving a rotating cube that sucks in orbiting animal parts and goes 'moo'.



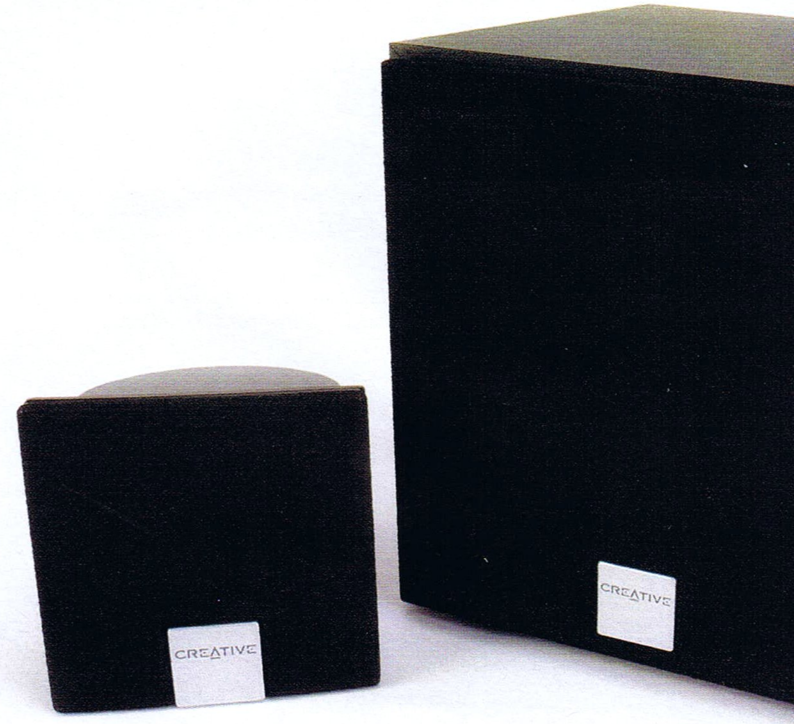
GEAR

More barely-useful tat and trinkets thrown into the mix with some genuinely pleasing gaming peripherals…

WHAT IS A BEST BUY?

Every month we'll pick out one piece of kit that stands head and shoulders above the rest and award it our coveted Best Buy badge. A Best Buy will combine superb quality with fantastic value for money – when we hand something a reward like that, you know it's worth investing in.

NGC BEST BUY



WILLIAMS F1 WHEEL

FROM JOYTECH • £44.99 • TEL 01753 496 700

Joytech continue their trend of releasing superb-quality peripherals at a remarkably low price. This steering wheel is far and away the finest example we've used so far. To start with it feels exceptionally sturdy. The wheel itself offers plenty of resistance when you turn it and the action is very smooth, doing away with the horrible plastic feel of other wheels. This on its own would have been enough, but Joytech have crammed in loads of smart features. You can adjust the sensitivity to your own taste, it has F1-style gear-change paddles and a stick (which also feels sweet), and the pedals are solid and responsive under your feet. It's also a perfect replica of Juan Pablo Montoya's own wheel which doubles up as a clock. A truly fantastic piece of kit.

BETTER THAN…



GTZ 500 RACING WHEEL
FROM SAITEK • £30.99
This was the 'best' wheel available – but up against this, it gets shown up for the cheap rubbish it actually is.





NGC BEST BUY

WHEELS TO WIN!

WE'VE GOT FIVE OF THESE BEAUTIES TO GIVE AWAY…

Complete the statement below and send it to the usual address. Normal rules apply, with one exception: entries covered in custard (you know who you are) or any other foodstuffs will be disqualified. That also includes cheese and other dairy products.

Juan Pablo Montoya is…

a) …a time-travelling 15th century Portugese duke.
b) …a South American drugs baron.
c) …a Formula One racing driver.

Answers on a (clean) postcard to:
This Wheel's On Fire, **NGC** Magazine, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW.



INSPIRE 2.1 SPEAKERS

FROM CREATIVE LABS ● £34.99 ● TEL 01223 727 000

This is just getting silly now. It seems like every time we nip out for a bowel movement or a plate of meat chips, the postie lugs another set of speakers up the stairs to the office. This time it's the turn of PC peripheral makers Creative Labs, who have a very good track record when it comes to anything to do with games and noise. It shows in these speakers, too. The clarity is excellent, the speakers go up nice and loud without too much distortion and, in a rather sensible move, they haven't designed their speakers to look 'crazy' or 'special' or, indeed, 'crap' – they're just nice and square and black. Kinda like Oxo cubes. But not as brown. And bigger. With the ability to emit sound. So not like Oxo cubes at all, then. More like speakers.

BETTER THAN...



XA3021 GAMING THEATRE
ALTEC LANSING ● £79.99
Well, not technically better – the Altec Lansing ones go REALLY loud – but in terms of value for money/sound quality, we reckon you should go for the Creative Labs speakers instead.



MINI WOOFER

FROM GAMESTER ● £12.99 ● TEL 01992 503 133

We don't get it, we really don't. It would be unfair to give this a kicking because in actual fact, the sound quality is pretty good. The GBA's sound capabilities aren't the best, and this device improves on the handheld's tinny speaker rather well without making it sound as horrible as that godawful Robo-Power thing we reviewed a couple of issues back. The trouble is, we really can't recommend it to you. There just isn't any point in having it when a decent pair of headphones are much better, far more practical, available at half the price, and won't irritate your parents into beating you to a pulp and leaving you for dead.

NOT AS GOOD AS...



HEADPHONES
FREE WITH EVERY PORTABLE MUSIC-PLAYING MACHINE
Slim and discreet, these amazing marvels of modern science can actually fit over your ears, sending the waves that make up what we call 'sound' *directly into your brain*!



GUURILLA BAG

FROM GUURILLA ● £18.00 ● NET WWW.GUURILLA.COM

It's all very well and good having a multi-platform console-carrying bag if you own all three machines – but if you've only got a Gamecube, then there's a bit of a problem. Nintendo's little machine so small and compact compared to the other two that it's rather pointless to buy this just for it. The bag does come with a pile of foam to keep stuff in place, but – well, how can we put it… it's the kind of bag that makes you look like a right spanner. Take it from us: buy a Gamecube-specific bag for carrying your stuff in. It may be a little more pricey, but it'll do the job better than this.

NOT AS GOOD AS...



GAMECUBE CARRY CASE
FROM COMPETITION PRO ● £19.99
Only a couple of quid more expensive. It's sturdy, and has enough room to carry your Cube, leads and four pads as well as a stack of games.

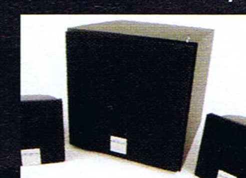
NGC ESSENTIALS



5.6" TFT MONITOR
JOYTECH ● £99
The sharpest, cheapest, biggest and best screen around so far. Absolutely no contest whatsoever (not that there's much).



PRO PAD
LOGIC3 ● £14.99
Still the best third-party controller around – we'll be surprised if anyone beats it. It's sturdy, the analogue is almost perfect, and it's comfortable to hold. Lovely.



INSPIRE 2.1 SPEAKERS
CREATIVE LABS ● £35
After much deliberation, we figured that while they're not quite as good on the sound-quality front as Altec Lansing's speakers, at half the price, these offer better value.



WILLIAMS F1 RACING WHEEL
JOYTECH ● £44.99
Amazing. Not too pricey and leagues ahead of the competition. This little baby actually makes driving games even more fun than before. An essential purchase.



AFTER-BURNER
TRITON LABS ● £35
Most GBA lights don't require sawing, gluing and soldering to install, but once fitted there's no better lighting alternative to this.

EXPERT TIPS, HUGE FEATURES, TRIVIA AND MORE

EXTENDED PLAY



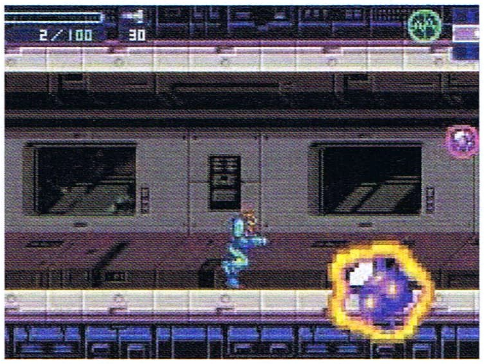
TIME WARP!



URA ZELDA

Side-step into a realm where N64 meets GC and revisit a Shigsy-crafted masterpiece in this special Gamecube edition of *Ocarina of Time* – with a twist! A surprise bonus disc bundled with the Japanese version of *The Wind Waker*, it's hopefully destined for UK gamers too. Check out what *Ura Zelda* offers and how it plays right here. P104

MAPPY DAYS



METROID FUSION

How are you faring with Samus's GBA exploits? Multiple maps to save your skin. Er, bio-suit. P82

I'M THE BEST

Like hell you are. Unless your best scores feature in our leagues of fame. Then you *might* be… P94

COMPENDIUM

We hassle Eidos PR guru Mark Allen until he goes insane, plus plenty more to keep you busy. P110

PLUS!

TIPS EXTRA

More tips than a London lap-dancing club descended on by drunken businessmen. P90

CONTENTS

NGC TELLS YOU HOW TO...

FUTURISTIC SPACE-MAPS AHOY!

FIND YOUR WAY IN FUSION!

NGC GUARANTEE EVERY SECTOR MAPPED!



WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Zelda with guns, that's what. Well, sort of. The _Metroid_ series has been away for a while, but with this, and the imminent arrival of the Gamecube's _Metroid Prime_, bounty hunter Samus Aran is back after an eight-year absence and ready to nourish your gaming tubers. It's all about exploration and isolation and blowing away nasty aliens. And, well, really, what more could you want in a game? Really?

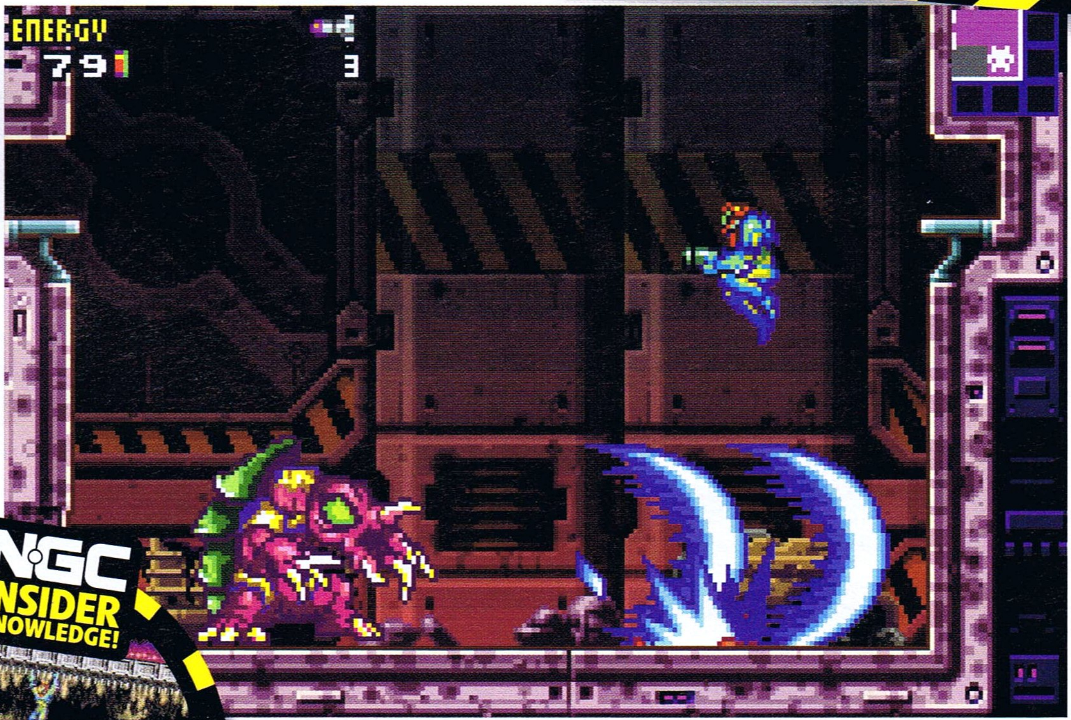


WHAT WE SAID IN ISSUE 76

"Metroid Fusion offers a perfectly rounded gaming experience, and you won't get bored of it; it doesn't drag, there's no filler material, and it's constantly thrilling… it perfectly complements the environments of Metroid Prime. *A treat."*

NGC INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING 92





Never get lost again in this handheld classic.

METROID MAPPED!

What we haven't done here is given a full, blow-by-blow walkthrough for *Metroid Fusion*, because a) it'd make for a lot of boring pages of words, and b) we don't want to spoil the delicious feeling of exploration that's part of the *Metroid* experience. (You can also add c) it's easier to make the art monkeys draw maps, if you like).

These maps give you the layout of every sector – you won't be able to access everything at once, as certain doors are locked until later in the game, and you'll need power-ups to access plenty of places – such as, say, speed boosts to break down a wall. However, our handy key (right) works in conjunction with the maps to show you exactly what you'll need to access a given area. And when you inevitably need to find, say, extra missiles or bombs, we've got those marked down as well – plus where all the various data/recharge/save rooms are. You can't save just anywhere in *Fusion*, so knowing where the save rooms are lets you plan accordingly. You'll also see that power-ups and abilities are gained from defeating bosses (aside from capacity-increasing missile, energy and bomb tanks). We've given a couple of hints on the bosses, but again, it's fun figuring them out for yourself. Enjoy, and don't get lost.

NGC INSIDER KNOWLEDGE!



JUMPING FOR JOY

Don't forget the wall-jump. Just like Mario, Samus can bounce up vertical corridors by 'jumping' off walls. Useful!



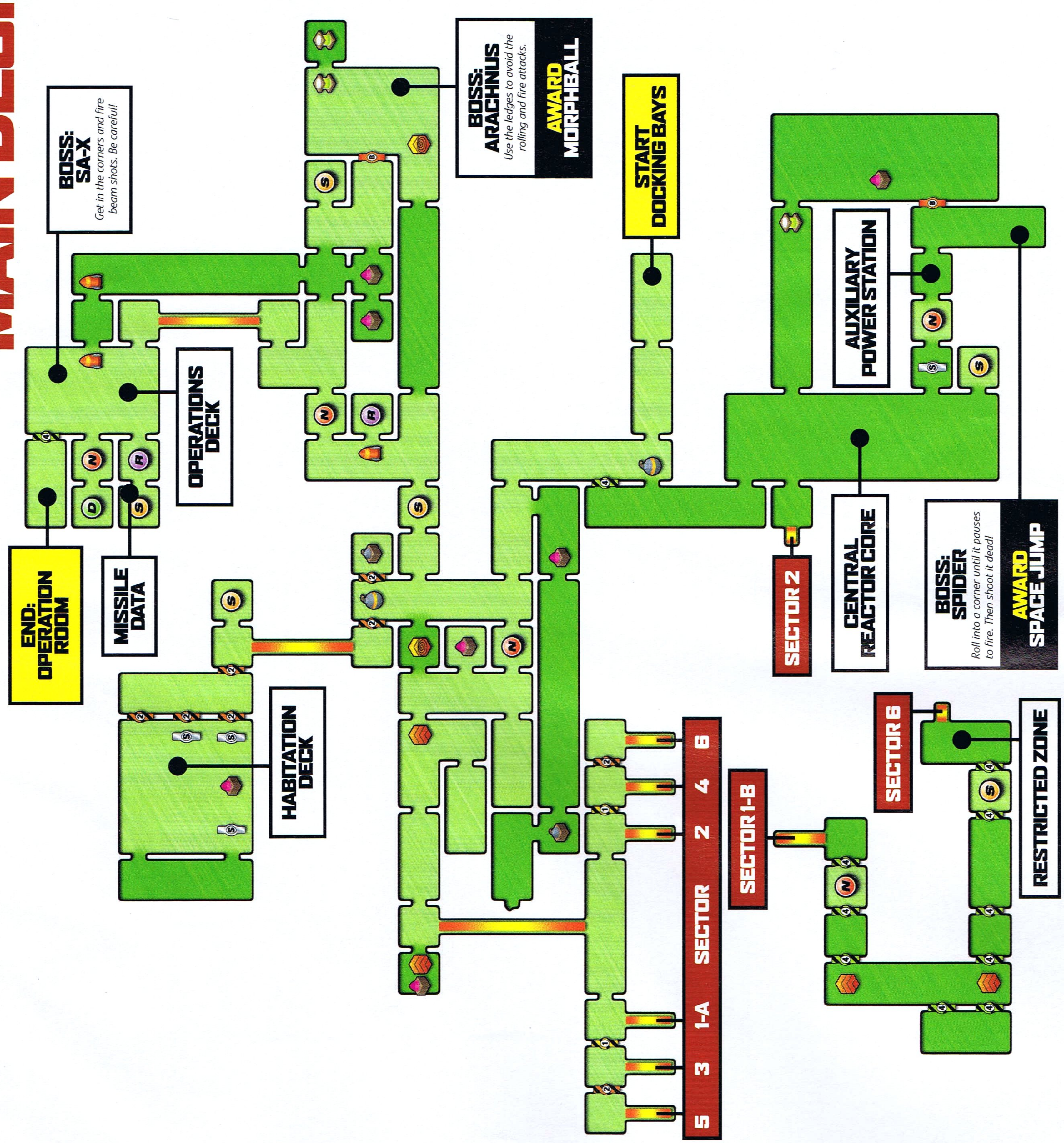
KEY

- POWER BOMB TANK
- MISSILE TANK
- ENERGY TANK
- REQUIRES SUPER MISSILES
- REQUIRES MISSILE TANK
- REQUIRES POWER BOMB
- REQUIRES SCREW ATTACK
- REQUIRES SPEED BOOST
- 1 ACCESSED AFTER FINDING LEVEL 1 SECURITY ROOM
- 4 ACCESSED AFTER FINDING LEVEL 4 SECURITY ROOM
- N NAVIGATOR ROOM
- R RECHARGE ROOM
- 2 ACCESSED AFTER FINDING LEVEL 2 SECURITY ROOM
- B BOSS DOOR
- D DATA ROOM
- 3 ACCESSED AFTER FINDING LEVEL 3 SECURITY ROOM
- S SECURITY ROOM
- S SAVE ROOM

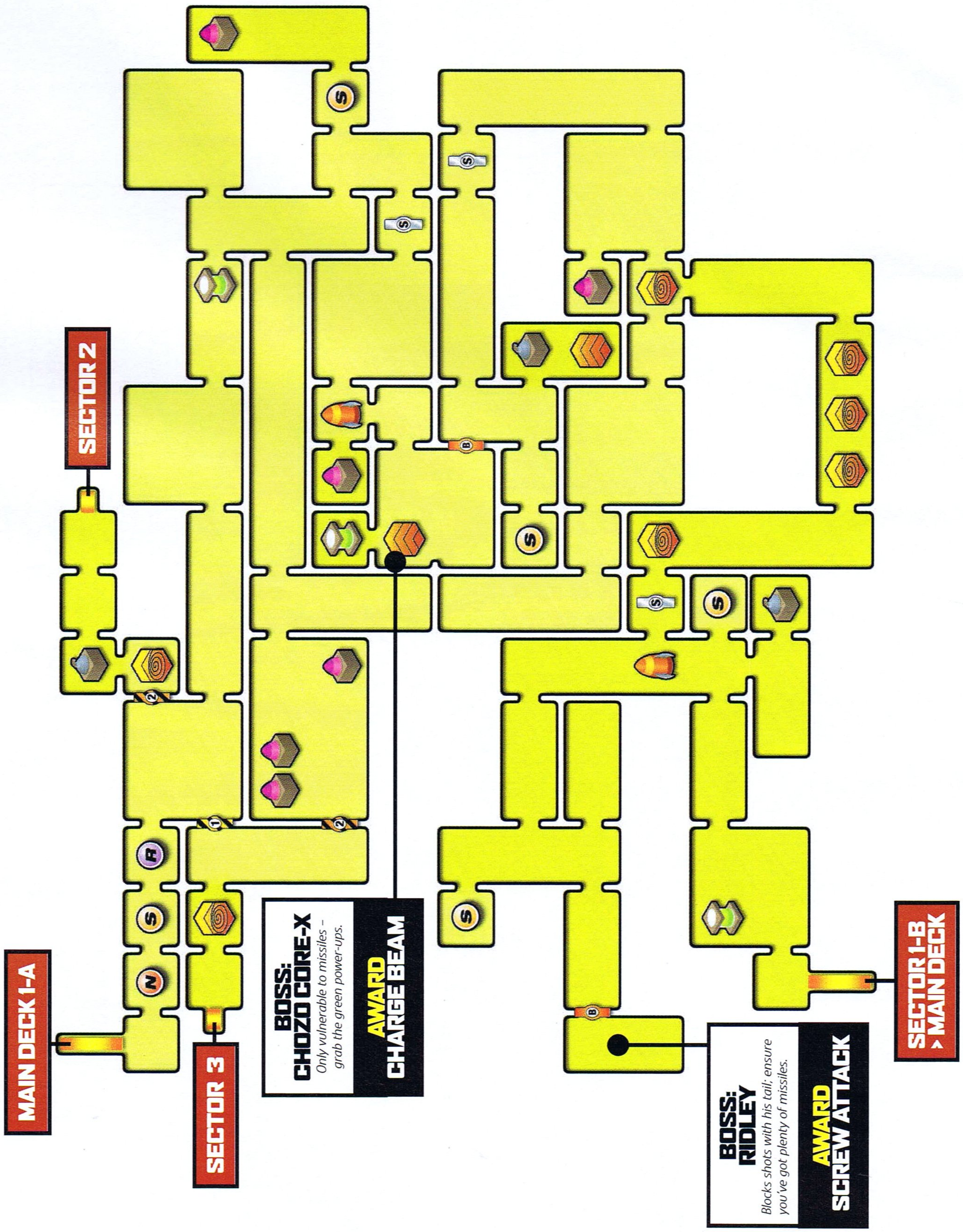
METROID MAPPED

Find your way in *Fusion*

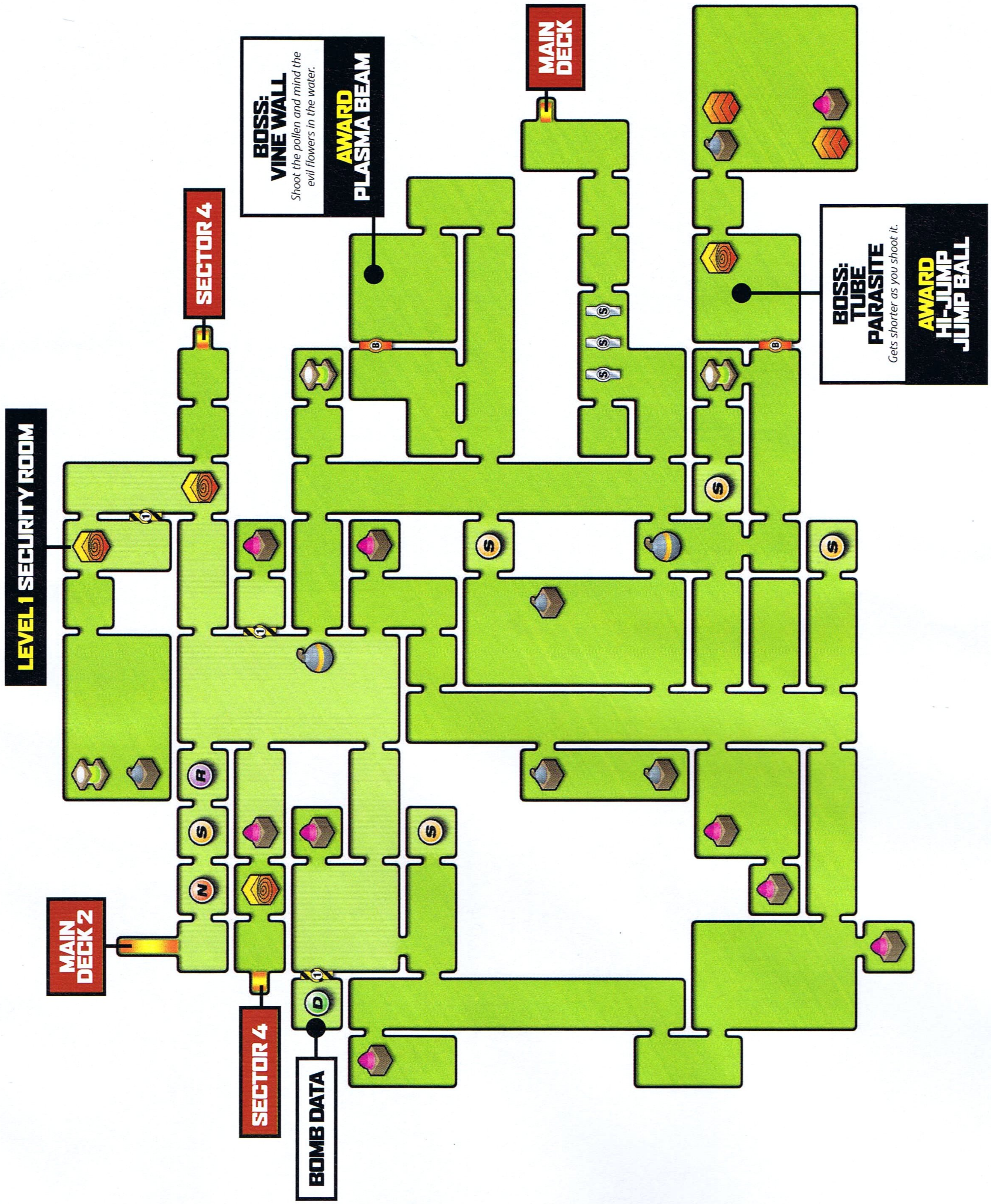
MAIN DECK



SECTOR 1 SRX

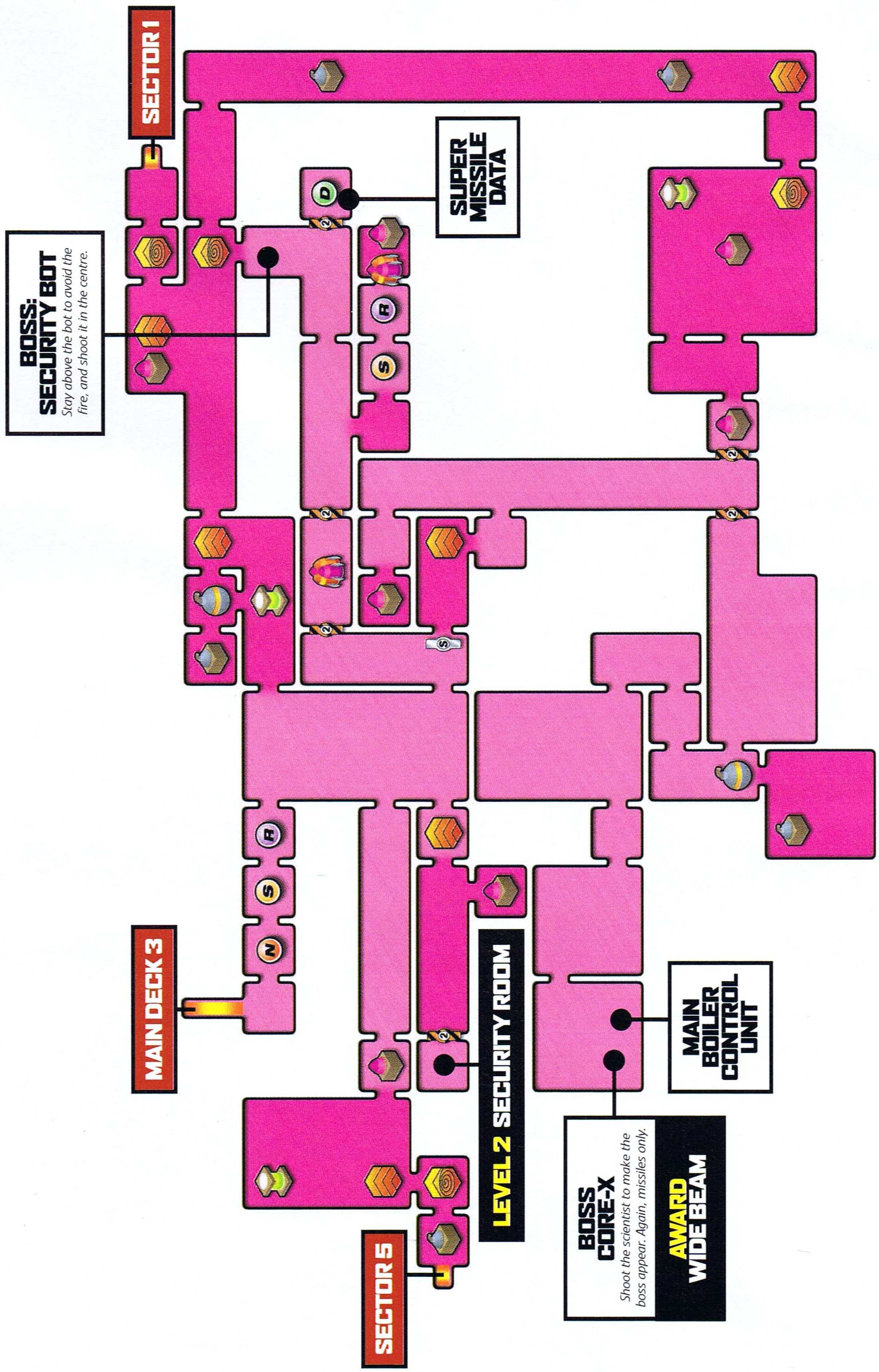

SECTOR 2
MAIN DECK 1-A
SECTOR 3
BOSS: CHOZO CORE-X
Only vulnerable to missiles – grab the green power-ups.
AWARD
CHARGE BEAM
BOSS: RIDLEY
Blocks shots with his tail; ensure you've got plenty of missiles.
AWARD
SCREW ATTACK
SECTOR 1-B
› MAIN DECK

SECTOR 2 TRO

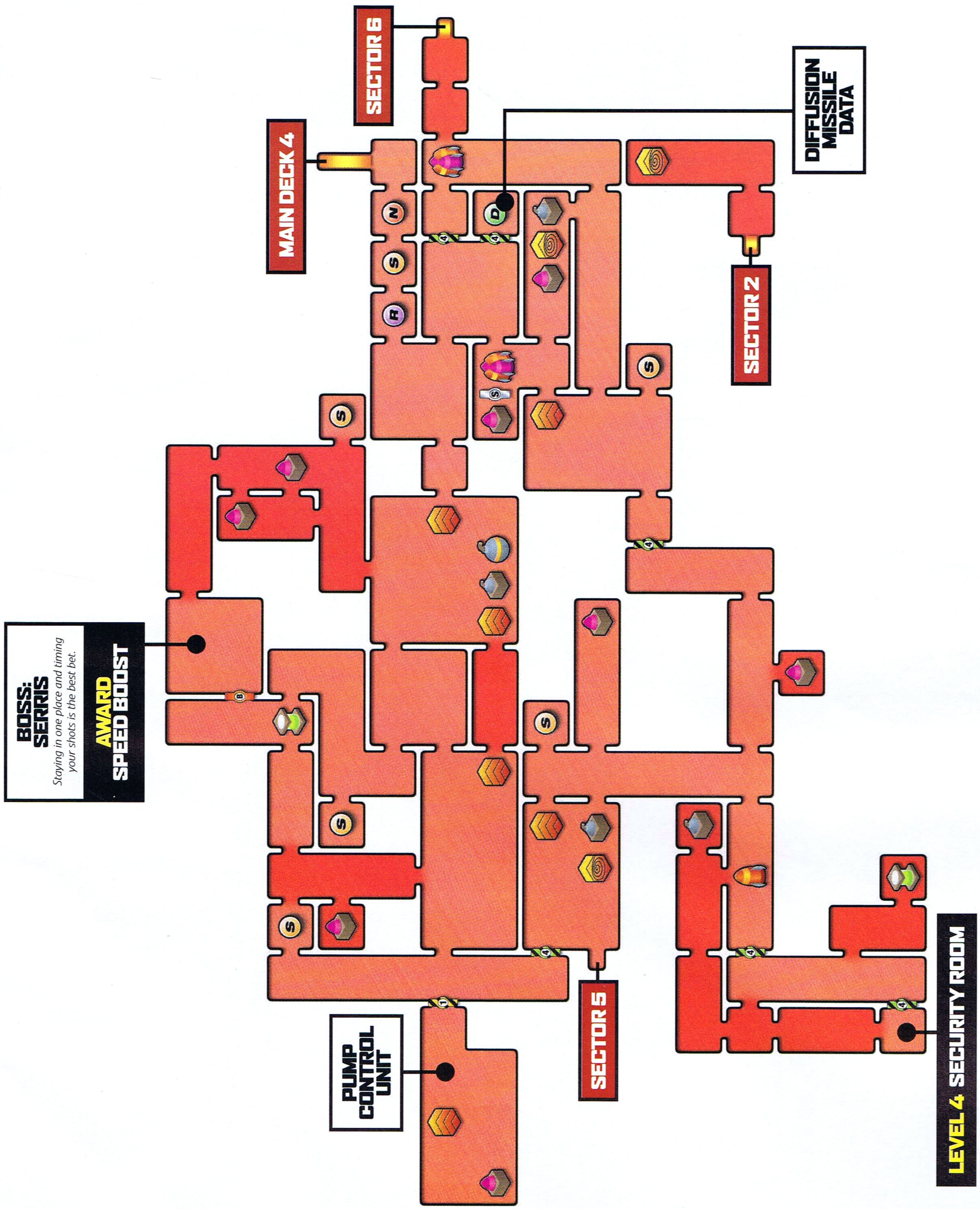


LEVEL 1 SECURITY ROOM
SECTOR 4
BOSS: VINE WALL
Shoot the pollen and mind the evil flowers in the water.
AWARD
PLASMA BEAM
MAIN DECK
BOSS: TUBE PARASITE
Gets shorter as you shoot it.
AWARD
HI-JUMP
JUMP BALL
MAIN DECK 2
SECTOR 4
BOMB DATA

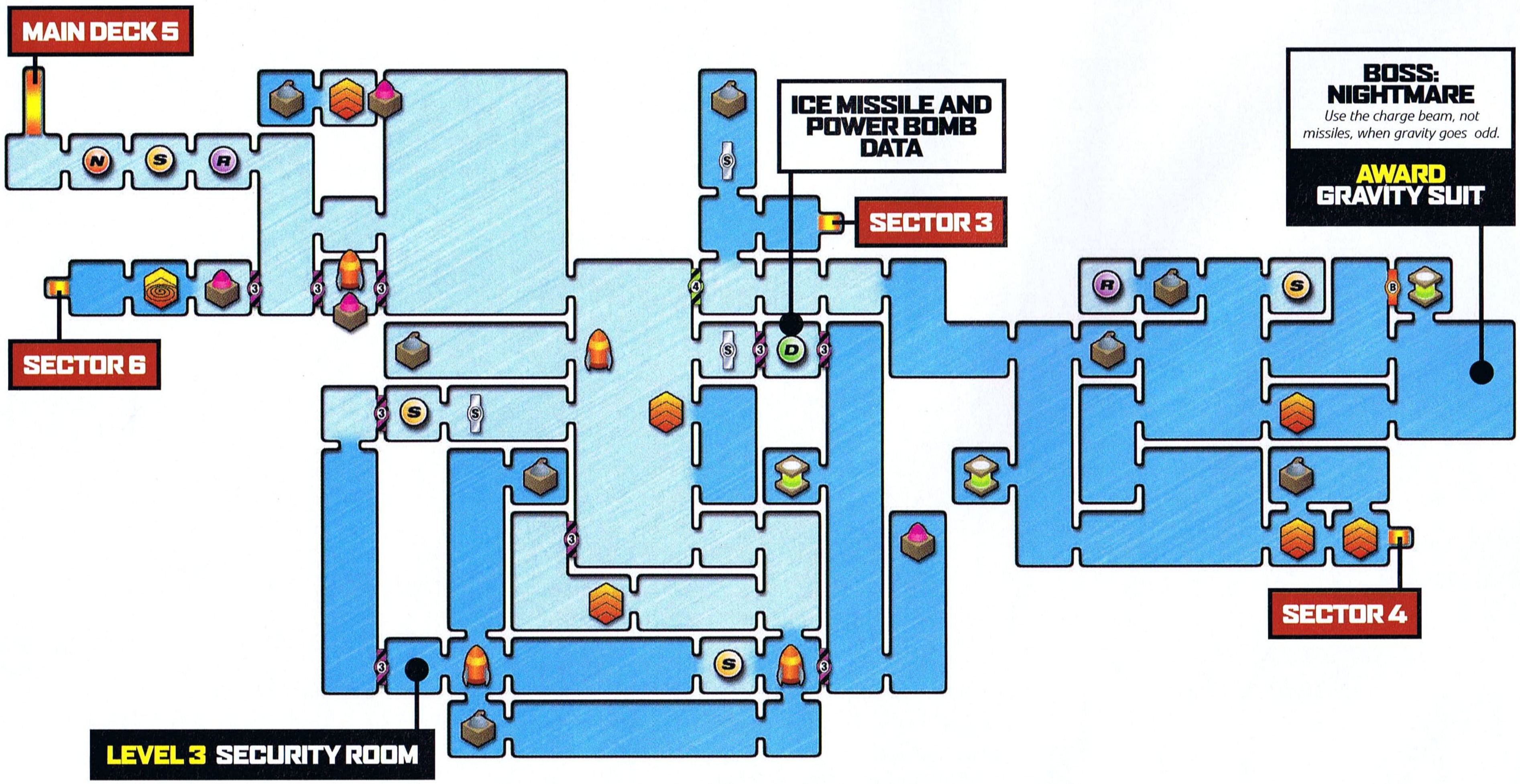
SECTOR 3 PYR


SECTOR 1
SUPER MISSILE DATA
BOSS: SECURITY BOT
Stay above the bot to avoid the fire, and shoot it in the centre.
MAIN DECK 3
LEVEL 2 SECURITY ROOM
MAIN BOILER CONTROL UNIT
BOSS CORE-X
Shoot the scientist to make the boss appear. Again, missiles only.
AWARD
WIDE BEAM
SECTOR 5

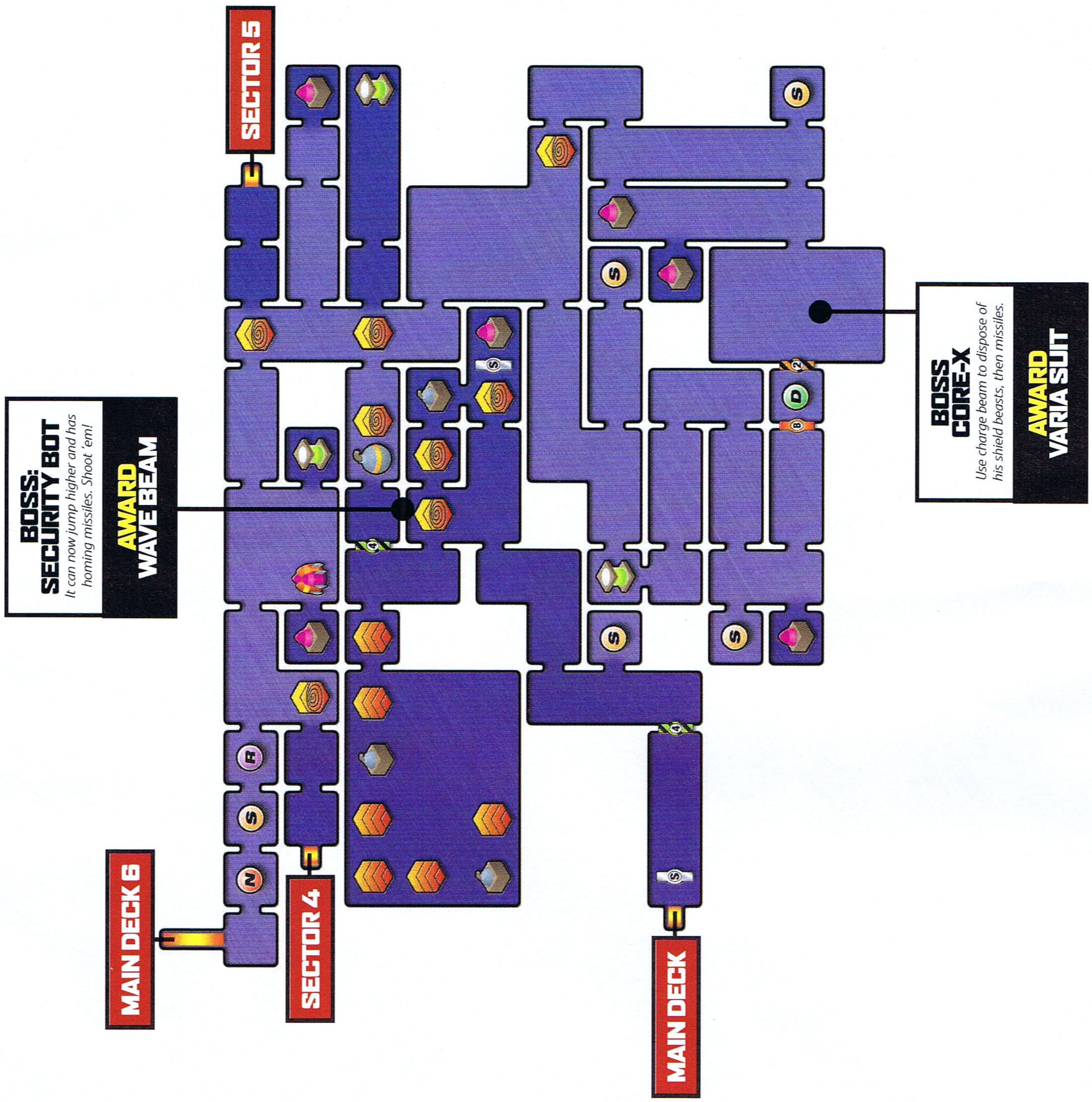
SECTOR 4 AQA


SECTOR 6
MAIN DECK 4
DIFFUSION MISSILE DATA
SECTOR 2
BOSS: SERRIS
Staying in one place and timing your shots is the best bet.
AWARD
SPEED BOOST
PUMP CONTROL UNIT
SECTOR 5
LEVEL 4 SECURITY ROOM

SECTOR 5 ARC


MAIN DECK 5
SECTOR 6
ICE MISSILE AND POWER BOMB DATA
SECTOR 3
BOSS: NIGHTMARE
Use the charge beam, not missiles, when gravity goes odd.
AWARD GRAVITY SUIT
SECTOR 4
LEVEL 3 SECURITY ROOM

SECTOR 6 NOC



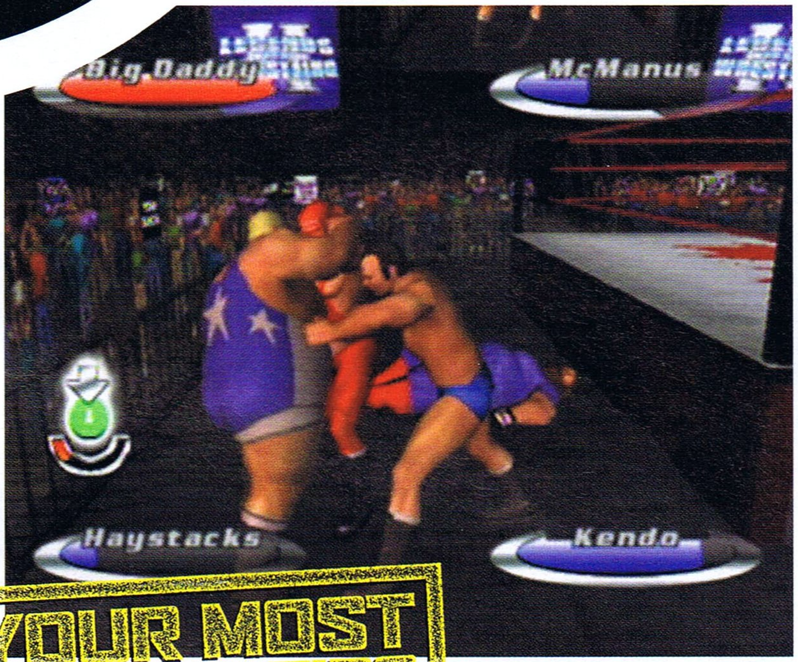
SECTOR 5
SECTOR 4
MAIN DECK 6
MAIN DECK
BOSS: SECURITY BOT
It can now jump higher and has homing missiles. Shoot 'em!
AWARD
WAVE BEAM
BOSS
CORE-X
Use charge beam to dispose of his shield beasts, then missiles.
AWARD
VARIA SUIT

NGC GUARANTEE
TIPS, CHEATS PROBLEMS SOLVED EVERYTHING YOU NEED!

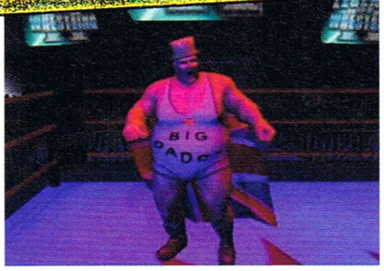
in association with Virgin megastores

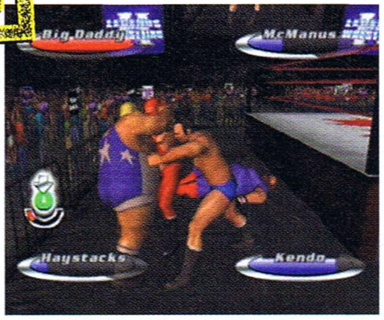
THE TIPS YOU NEED FOR THE GAMES YOU'RE PLAYING...

TIPS EXTRA



YOUR MOST WANTED TIPS





LEGENDS OF WRESTLING II

EXTRA RASSLIN' MENFOLK

Andy Kaufman Complete Career mode with Jerry Lawler.
Big John Studd Complete Career mode with any of the legends, then beat Studd in the Body Slam contest.
British Bulldog Beat Career mode with the Dynamite Kid.
Bruno Sammartino Complete Career mode with that legend of legends, Hulk Hogan.
Owen Hart Finish Career mode with Bret Hart.

UNLIMITED GREEN COINS

Complete Career mode with all the original wrestlers to get an endless supply of green coinage.

BOMBERMAN GENERATIONS

MINIGAME OPTION

Once you've collected ALL of the charaboms then you'll unlock the Minigame option in the main menu screen.

GOLDEN BOMBERMAN

Win a match in Battle mode, then play it again without changing any of the settings – other than the stage select – and you'll get to be the Golden Bomber himself.

MAX

Collect all of the Lightning Cards in normal mode – including the ones from the bosses – then enter Battle mode. You can now use the Z-button to transform from Bomberman into Max.

A/B OPTIONS

Completing Normal mode once opens up the Group A/B option in battle mode. Pressing up or down on the joypad toggles between the two – A gives you the standard power-ups, while entering mode B adds in all sorts of more advanced goodies to wreak havoc with.

NGC READER KNOWLEDGE!

Finish Ty The Tasmanian Tiger with a 100 per cent rating, and you'll open up a new bonus level!
Paddy Smith, Derby

Kill enemies closest to you in Turok Evolution – they pose the most threat to you.
Jay Summer, Kent

X-MEN: NEXT DIMENSION

EXTRA CHARACTERS

Fancy some extra grown men and women prancing about in tights and skin-tight lycra to fight with?

Bishop Beat Arcade mode with Gambit.
Hidden Psylocke Beat Arcade mode playing with Betsy.
Bastion Complete Story mode once.
Blob Beat Arcade mode with the unlocked Bishop.
Sentinel A Complete Arcade mode playing with Cyclops.

EXTRA COSTUMES

What's that – you're after *yet more* garish outfits to scrap in? Try these, then:

Costume 3 Beat the Story mode once.
Costume 4 Get 20 wins in Survival mode with all the characters.
Costume 5 Beat Arcade mode with everyone. On the Hard difficulty setting.
Costume 6 Complete the Time Attack mode with all characters.
Costume 8 Grab 40 wins in Survival mode (only with one character, though).









EVERYTHING!

To open up absolutely every single secret in *Next Dimension*, all you need to do is set aside enough time to play the game for more than 50 hours and tackle 1066 bouts. You can check the stats screen to monitor your progress.

SECRET MOVIE

If you loiter around after the credits following the end of the Story mode, sooner or later an extra bonus movie will play for your delight. Wow.

READERS' TOP TEN TIPS

Wanna free game? How about you send us in a tip so good that we're forced to marvel at your gaming nous and dish out the top spot to you?



1. RESIDENT EVIL

Grenades for days

Play as Jill and make sure you have the grenade launcher and at least one extra type of shell. Open an item box, put the extra shells in the first slot, then switch them immediately with the grenade launcher. You'll now have about 400 shots!

Andrew Anglesey, Huddersfield

2. TIMESPLITTERS 2

Fists of fury

In the Fight Off The Living Dead challenge, try using only your fists. Doing this gets you a ridiculously high score as you get lots and lots of points for every fiend you kill!

Andrew Miller, Aberdeen

3. SUPER MONKEY BALL

Cheeky monkey

When you're playing a multiplayer race, hold down R, L, A, B, X, Y and Z just before the announcer says go and you'll instantly win the race!

Joseph Gerrard, London

4. STARFOX ADVENTURES

Shopping spree

Go down one of the passages either side of the shop exit and look for a dark section of rock where there are no flames. You can walk through this to lift up a rock which always gives you 30 Scarabs. Aces!

Luke Long, Southam

5. SUPER SMASH BROS

Virtual Boy

Complete the game with Sheik to get the Zelda trophy, then once you've collected over 60 trophies go view the collection. You can now press up on the control stick to see the screen scroll up and there on the shelf will be every console Nintendo have made.

Christopher Jacobsen, Balway

6. SUPER MONKEY BALL

Animal magnetism

If you use a magnet ball in Monkey Target then a special target will appear in the water. Land on it for a mammoth 500 points!

Adam Humphreys, Dorset

7. TIMESPLITTERS 2

Playing with fire

Equip yourself with the crossbow, walk near a torch and you can light the arrow. This will not only hit your target, but also set them alight.

Paul Huckle, Herts

8. LEMON JUICE

When you're cleaning windows

Don't waste money on expensive window-cleaning products at the supermarket – a dash of lemon juice will do just as good a job at a fraction of the price.

Kim Bauer, Los Angeles

9. SUPER SMASH BROS

It's-a Luigi

Use a memory card with a *Luigi's Mansion* save on it and you'll get a little Luigi trophy.

Roy Jenkinson, Bradford

10. PIKMIN

SOS

You can move any stray yellow or red pikmin out of water with the C-stick – but be quick!

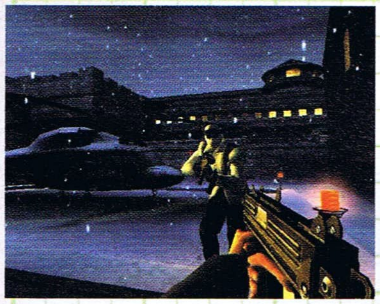
Jane Blanche, Cambridge



DR KITTS' GAME CLINIC

In about three seconds a doctor will begin to speak.





Dr Kitts,

Being a devoted *GoldenEye* fan from my hazy N64 days, I snapped up a copy of James' latest adventure, *Nightfire*, as soon as I snagged a Gamecube. However, I seem to be hopelessly stuck at the end of the very first real level. When I attempt to escape with the girl, I always end up killing myself when trying to take down the enemy helicopter. What am I doing wrong?

Dan Clasby, via email

Dr Kitts issues a press statement affirming that he's still 'from the block'…

Ah. One of my old patients, Mr Bond – although the Hippocratic Oath prevents me from divulging any further. What you need to do is a matter of simple physics and common sense. See those panes of glass that surround you? Simply gun them out first to get a clear shot at the bad guy. That way you'll avoid turning yourself and the floozy into nothing but scattered remains.

Dr Kitts,

I know it's quite an old game, but I love the speed-fest that is *Burnout*. However, I can't seem to ever get my turbo bar up to full power, no matter how many near misses I have with big trucks and transporters. Am I doing something wrong?

Jeff Bates, Bristol

Dr Kitts stands on top of a one hundred foot tower for thirty consecutive days. No one seems to notice…

Burnout is indeed one zippy speedster of a videogame, and even more so when you power up that turbo to the full. The easiest way to accomplish this is to simply drive on the wrong side of the road, in the hard shoulder near the middle. This way you'll have a clear route as well as seeing your turbo potential rapidly increase. Simple.

Dr Kitts,

You have to help me before I pull out all of my hair in frustration and end up looking like Jes! In *Resident Evil*, in the room where you have to push the statue onto the switch before the walls close in on you, I just can't do it in time. It is very annoying. Please share your words of wisdom with me so I can continue the game.

Ben Clark, Evesham

Dr Kitts presents expert testimony at the trial of yet another royal butler…

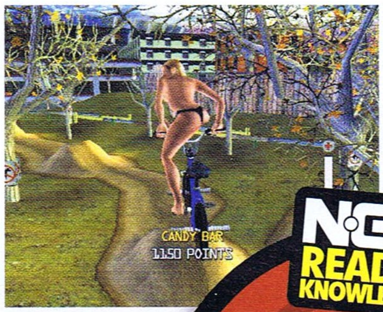
Thank you for your polite letter, Mr Clark. However, I shall ignore the five kisses you added after you signed your name. Anyway, zombies and other assorted healthy members of society, what you need to realise about this room is that you don't need to actually push the statue all the way into the niche in the wall. All you really need to do is simply line it up with it and then let the game automatically pull it on into the hole. Then you can carry on with your quest to put bullet-holes in the heads of the dead.





CODE BANK

Don't have time to play your games properly? Use the codes, then…





BMX XXX

Lots of triple-X codes for this less-than-triple-A quality title…

- **65 SWEET RIDES** Unlock all bikes
- **CHAMPAGNE ROOM** All FMV movies
- **GHOST CONTROL** Ghost control mode
- **MAKE ME ANGRY** Green Skin mode
- **FLUFFY BUNNY** Happy Bunny mode
- **HELLOKITTY487** Ride Hello Kitty bikes
- **ITCHI594** Use Itchi's bikes
- **JOYRIDE18** Use Joyride's bikes
- **KARMA311** Use Karma's bikes
- **LATEY411** Use Latey's bikes
- **MANUEL415** Use Manuel's bikes
- **MIKA362436** Use Mika's bikes
- **NUTTER290** Use Nutter's bikes
- **RAVE10** Use Rave's bikes
- **TWAN18** Use Twan's bikes
- **SKEETER666** Use Skeeter's bikes
- **TRIPLEDUB922** Use Tripledub's bikes
- **ELECTRICITYBAD** Play as Amish boy
- **IOWARULES** Rampage Skatepark level
- **UNDERGROUND** Roots level
- **BOYBANDSSUCK** Syracuse level
- **THATDAMLEVEL** The Dam level
- **BAABAA** Sheep Hills level
- **SHOWMETHEMONEY** Las Vegas level
- **SHOWMETHEMONKEY** Launch Pad 69 level
- **HEAVYPETTING** Super Crash mode
- **XXX RATED CHEAT** Level select
- **3RD SOG** Activate Nightvision mode
- **PARABOLIC** Activate Visible Gap mode

NGC READER KNOWLEDGE!

There's an easy way to find lots of Wizard Cards in Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets. Go to the Burrow, then Diagon Alley, then look inside the chests that are scattered around there. Easy, huh?
James McNally, Sutton

SONIC MEGA COLLECTION

Here you go – how about some level-select cheats for the first three of the spikey blue critter's games…

- **SONIC 1** Press U, D, L, R on the D-Pad on the title screen
- **SONIC 2** Play the numbers 19, 65, 09 and 17 in the sound test screen
- **SONIC 3** Press U, U, D, D, U, U, U, U when it shows Sonic on the title screen

JAMES BOND 007: NIGHTFIRE

What's that, Bond? You're after some cheats for your latest Gamecube escapade? Well, pay attention 007. You could always try inputting these – shaken, not stirred – into the Secret Unlocks menu…

- **TNT** Multiplayer Demolition mode
- **ORBIT** Multiplayer Goldeneye Strike mode
- **BOOM** Explosive scenery
- **PASSPORT** Level select
- **GUARDIAN** Protect mode
- **SCOPE** Assassination mode
- **TRANSMIT** Uplink mode
- **TEAMWORK** Team King of the Hill mode
- **Q LAB** Unlock all upgrades
- **DENTAL** Play as Jaws in multiplayer
- **BOWLER** Play as Oddjob in multiplayer
- **JANUS** Play as Xenia in multiplayer
- **SLICK** Play as Electra King in multiplayer
- **CIRCUS** Play as Miss Galore in multiplayer
- **ASSASSIN** Play as Scaramanga in multiplayer mode
- **VOODOO** Play as Baron Samedi in multiplayer mode
- **NUCLEAR** Play as Christmas Jones in multiplayer mode
- **BADGIRL** Play as Mayday in multiplayer
- **BITESIZE** Play as Nick Nack in multiplayer
- **MIDAS** Play as Goldfinger in multiplayer
- **BLACKTIE** Play as Tuxedo Bond in multiplayer mode

NGC YOUR TOP TIPS

YOUR TOP TIPS Share the knowledge and bag yourself a prize…

Found an interesting cheat, tip, secret or quirky thing in one of your games? Then send it into us immediately! Each month we'll stick the best into our Readers' Tips section. In return, if your tip is the number one readers' tip, we'll send you a Gamecube game of your choice. Sound good? Then don't hesitate – DO IT!

HERE'S MY TOP TIP...

IT'S FOR

AND THIS IS HOW IT WORKS



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Address ....

....

....

.... **Postcode** ....

Send to:
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Bath, BA1 2BW,
or e-mail ngc@futurenet.co.uk

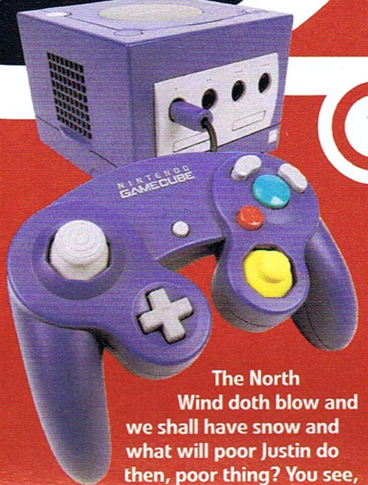
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Brand NEW reader challenges – + – Brand NEW reader challenges – + – Brand NEW

NGC GUARANTEE
THE FIRST EVER GAMING LEAGUES, AND STILL THE BEST

THE GREATEST LEAGUE TABLES IN THE WORLD JUST GOT EVEN GREATESTER! IS THAT EVEN POSSIBLE? BEAST!

I'M THE BEST

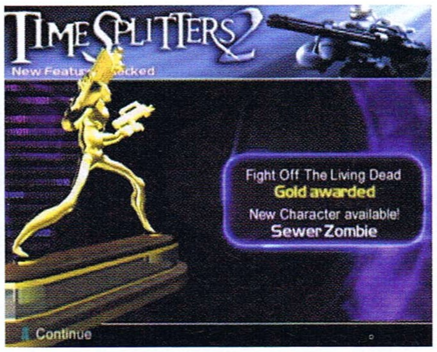


The North Wind doth blow and we shall have snow and what will poor Justin do then, poor thing? You see, Jud's spent all winter bashing poles the size of Scotch pines to fence in the giant cockatrice previously destined for Christmas dinner. It's now twice the size of a bus, breathes fire, and has talons that could gut a five-ton tin sheep. Not to mention the phalanx of petrified binmen lining the street outside, silently clutching granite rubbish bags. S'what happens when you don't pay attention at the pet shop, and feed terrifying mythological creatures crash weight gain, and not mashed wheat grain.

That's why the magazine looks so rubbish these days, so it's a good thing we had an extra page of I'm The Best to put in to pad out the paucity of drawing and colouring-in work the Art Dept did this month. Three new leagues are now fully-formed enough to send your scores into now. NOW!

1





STAR PERFORMANCE

Zombies are generally very easy to kill – insofar as you actually can kill something that's already dead. They're slow, stupid, and make little discernible effort to defend themselves. However, an insatiable appetite for brains – *your* brains – means they're also very persistent, continuing to attack even after you've shot off all of their arms, legs, fingers and toes. But they're still the only foe you're ever likely to have the time to laugh at heartily as it stumbles slowly towards you, before shooting a bullet into its stupid rotting fizzog.

It's not quite as funny when you're stuck in a small room filled with the buggers, though, armed only with an antiquated shotgun and the fists your own mother gave you. Which makes the sterling demonstration of zombie-killage **Sean Ames** of **Inverness** submitted all the more impressive, with his cold-blooded spree of execution producing a score of 42,370 in the Behead the Undead challenge.

We haven't put the *Timesplitters 2* tables up just yet though – they'll be replacing the stagnant *Crazy Taxi* leagues as of next month – but you can rest assured that a score of that calibre will be holding the top of the table for some time. Sean gets a Logic 3 joypad for his efforts – in the meantime, don't have 'mares…

new READER CHALLENGES
TURN TO PAGE 97

2 HOW TO PROVE YOUR ACHIEVEMENT

When sending us evidence of your gaming achievements, it's useful to follow these steps…

PHOTOGRAPHS

If you're sending us evidence of the photographic variety:

1. Turn off the camera's flash (or cover it up) to prevent it from reflecting off the screen.
2. Draw the curtains to eradicate sunlight.
3. Use a fast film (200 or 400 ASA).
4. If you're using a digicam then use a slower shutter speed.
5. Point at the screen and click away.

PLEASE NOTE: In the past we've had experience of certain scamps 'fiddling' with their photographic evidence, so this time round we're being extra-specially (is that right?) careful. We would, in fact, welcome video evidence over photographic evidence. If, however, you can only send photos, be warned: any doubts over the legality of your entry will lead to instant disqualification, and jeering.

VIDEO

If you're going to be sending us the evidence that comes on a tape, follow these instructions carefully:

1. Plug the TV lead from the Gamecube into the Signal In socket of your video.
2. Connect the Signal Out socket on your video to your TV.
3. Find a spare channel on the video and search for the signal.
4. After completing and recording the challenge, rewind the tape and send it in.

NGC YOUR BEST PERFORMANCE

3 HERE'S MY BEST PERFORMANCE…



MARIO SUNSHINE
Best time on Il Piantissimo's Sand Sprint ....
Best time on Il Piantissimo's Crazy Climb ....

TIMESPLITTERS 2
Highest score in Behead the Undead ....
Best time in Pane in the Neck ....
Best time in Escape from Neo Tokyo ....

LUIGI'S MANSION
Total number of Gs ....
Time taken to beat final boss ....

ROGUE LEADER
Battle of Endor kills ....
Death Star Attack accuracy..................
Star Destroyer fastest time..................

WAVE RACE
Aspen Lake best race time ....
Lost Temple Lagoon stunt score ....
Southern Island lap time ....

SUPER SMASH BROS
Highest score in Home Run ....
Highest juggle combo..................
Quickest time in 100-man melee ....

SONIC 2
Juggernaut Level number of rings..................
Escape from the Military Base best time ....

TONY HAWK'S 3
The Foundry highest score..................
Canada highest trick combo. ....
Rio highest score ....

CRAZY TAXI
Ten-Minute Mode most money.. ....
Crazy Jump longest jump ....
Crazy Drift combo ....

SUPER MONKEY BALL
Fastest time on Frozen Highway..................
Highest score on Monkey Target ....
Fastest time on Advanced Floor 2 ....

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LUIGI'S MANSION



See how many Gs you can notch up at the end of the game.

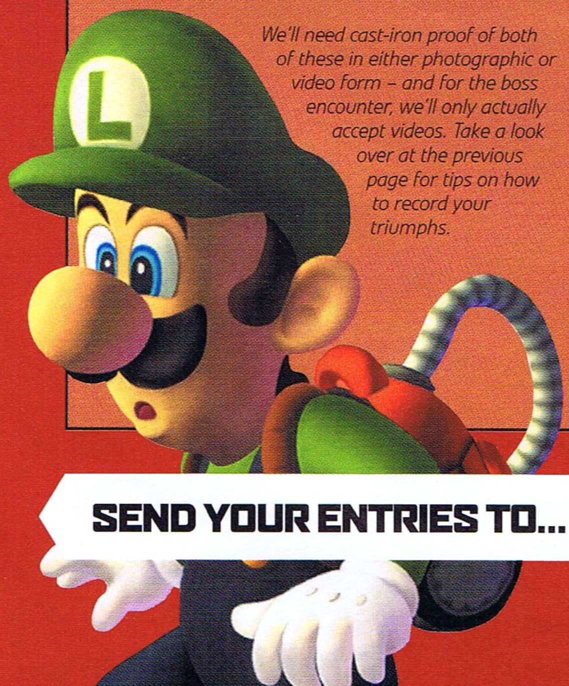
1	John Dawson, Hull	186,375,000G
2	Sean Hinton, Kidderminster	185,710,000G
3	Daniel Mitchell, East Sussex	184,440,000G
4	Jamie Butters, East Sussex	184,060,000G
5	Mark Richardson, Leeds	183,575,000G



See how long it takes you to dispose of the final boss.

1	Tim Wingate, Tyne & Wear	122 secs
2	Grover Mitchell, Newport	139 secs
3	Alex Gough, Rochdale	142 secs
4	Jonathan Bisaby, Leicester	144 secs
5	Kelvin Turphy, Taunton	151 secs

We'll need cast-iron proof of both of these in either photographic or video form – and for the boss encounter, we'll only actually accept videos. Take a look over at the previous page for tips on how to record your triumphs.



STAR WARS: ROGUE LEADER



Most kills on Battle of Endor (you must win at least a Bronze medal).

1	Kevin Ibbotson, Dublin	241
2	Dave Every, Cheshire	221
3	Adam Goodwin, Anglesey	204
4	Joe Newman, London	191
5	David Gamble, Antrim	175



Highest accuracy on Death Star Attack (video evidence only, please).

1	Kieran Cornwell, London	93%
2	Chris Fletcher, Stockport	86%
3	Jack Gill, Northallerton	83%
4	Anthony Musson, Preston	82%
5	Thomas Scoffham, Nuneaton	80%

Fastest time achieved taking out the Star Destroyer in Razor Rendezvous.

1	Simon Thomas, Solihull	0:22
2	Dave Every, Cheshire	0:24
3	Paul Bowers, Wolverhampton	0:32
=	Gavin Maidment, Surrey	0:32
4	Alan Dyer, Maidstone	0:33

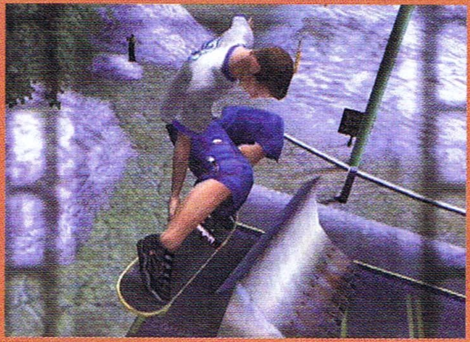
On Death Star Attack, we don't want to see you shoot three TIEs with homing torpedoes for 100 per cent accuracy – that's for maggots. We want to see video footage of REAL skill. Pics are fine for the other two.

TONY HAWK'S 3



Highest point score on The Foundry level.

1	Andrew Nizinskyj, Barnsley	8,436,013
2	John Copeland, Co Durham	4,203,016
3	David Peacock, Co Durham	3,886,325
4	Mickey Ieronymides, St Albans	3,255,466
5	Chris Hepworth, Pontefract	2,691,264



Highest trick combo on the Canada level.

1	Andrew Nizinskyj, Barnsley	7,002,912
2	David Peacock, Co Durham	3,886,325
3	Gary Lord, Hull	2,173,200
4	John Copeland, Co Durham	1,879,038
5	Kieran Cornwell, London	1,589,816

Highest score on the Rio level.

1	Daniel Rouse, High Wycombe	7,039,117
2	Andrew Nizinskyj, Barnsley	4,225,882
3	Mickey Ieronymides, St Albans	4,225,882
4	David Bennett, Isle of Man	4,095,129
5	Andrew Cooper, Surrey	3,786,550

Remember, Tony Hawk's 3 is blinkin' hard, so you'll need to put in the hours – once you have, get us your proof of the end screen in either photographic or, preferably, videographic form. Ta very much.

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WAVE RACE: BLUE STORM



Your best race time on Aspen Lake in Normal mode.

1	Paul Holmes, Edinburgh	0'21"144
2	Dave Everey, Cheshire	1'00"890
3	John Dawson, Copeland Islands	1'01"614
4	Daniel Dunn, Boston	1'01"633
5	Frantzeskakis Dimitris, Greece	1'03"930



Your best stunt score on Lost Temple Lagoon.

1	Steven Lockwood, Bradford	35,545
2	Ben Tatlow, London	33,160
3	Jon East, Manchester	26,254
4	Frantzeskakis Dimitris, Greece	11,019
5	John Copeland, Co Durham	10,624

Your best lap time on Southern Island in Normal mode.

1	Dave Everey, Cheshire	0'16"276
2	John Dawson, Copeland Islands	0'16"334
3	Daniel Dunn, Boston	0'16"587
4	Andrew Cooper, Surrey	0'18"712
5	Benjamin Hayes, Berkshire	0'18"799

Fancy some? Again, we'll need cast-iron proof of your achievements – video is our choice medium, although we may also accept some photographic evidence, provided – of course – that it hasn't been altered or messed with in some way.

CRAZY TAXI



How much money you can nab in the Ten Minute Mode.

1	Phil Sturgeon, Bristol	$12,758
2	Alistair Kendall, Bristol	$12,340
3	Billy Keach, Essex	$11,693
4	Steven McKeon, Middlesex	$9,875
5	Karl Davies, Lanarkshire	$9,520



What your longest jump in Crazy Jump is.

1	Andrew Cooper, Surrey	381.95m
2	Thomas Sherwood, Cheshire	356.25m
3	Alistair Kendall, Bristol	351.63m
4	Jonny Elstree, Nottingham	346.98m
5	Billy Keach, Essex	339.81m

What's your highest Crazy Drift combo?

1	Andrew Cooper, Surrey	109
2	Anthony Henderson, Manchester	58
3	Mark Grafton, Ayrshire	31
4	Billy Keach, Essex	19
5	Steven McKeon & Nicky Day	17

For this one, we'll accept photographic or video evidence, but we won't accept 'fiddled-with' photos and we won't accept bribes, either. You know who you are... Well, on second thoughts, it depends how much you're offering.

SONIC ADVENTURE 2



How many rings you can get at the end of the Juggernaut chase section.

1	William Thomas, Shropshire	440
2	Adam Ely, Weybridge	437
3	Tom Sherwood, Cheshire	413
4	Robert McGuire, Co Dublin	334
5	Steven McKeon, Middlesex	307



What time you can notch up on Escape from the Military Base.

1	Tom Sherwood, Cheshire	01:42:52
2	Barry Templeton, Kilmarnock	01:43:57
3	Sam Ely, Weybridge	01:45:90
4	Nicholas Gill, Exeter	01:47:59
5	Jason Roberts, Stockport	01:51:43

Only the fastest need apply for this challenge. And we'll need video evidence for both of these beauties, too.



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SUPER SMASH BROS



How far can you hit the bag? We want to see your highest score in Home Run.

1	Ben Turner, Kent	974.3m
2	Dave Everey, Cheshire	602.6m
3	Jody Van Wijk, Netherlands	500.1m
4	Gary Butle, Berkshire	492.2m
5	George Graham, Surrey	489.2m



How many juggle combo hits can you get in before your foe hits the ground?

1	Ben Tatlow, London	13
2	Brent Foster, Ipswich	10
=	John Hammond, Hull	10
3	Richard Fitch, Derby	9
4	Scott Mearns, Ayr	7

Your quickest time in 100-Man Melee, using Mario only.

1	Ben Tatlow, London	03:05:90
2	John Hammond, Hull	03:11:04
3	William Peckover, Northants	03:55:55
4	Alan Mallon, London	04:22:65
5	Edward Teach, Bristol	05:01:32

Just as there's more than one way to skin a cat, there's more than one way to smack a bag – which is why we want videoed evidence of your attempt at the first challenge. Same goes for the juggle combo challenge – although we'll accept pics for 100-man melee.

MARIO SUNSHINE



Your best time on Il Pantissimo's Sand Sprint (Gelato Beach).

1	Sean Hinton, Kidderminster	10:50
2	Daniel Rouse, High Wycombe	13:63
3	Dennis Fitch, Leicester	14:83
4	Michael Armoire, Rochdale	17:09
5	Samuel Woods, Ilkley	17:76



Your best time in Il Pantissimo's Crazy Climb (Pianta Village).

1	Daniel Rouse, High Wycombe	16:80
2	Sean Hinton, Kidderminster	21:55
3	Michael Armoire, Rochdale	24:50
4	Patrick Schultz, Austria	24:76
5	David Carr, Kent	25:02

Two timed challenges from the best Mario game since the last one – videoed evidence is, as ever, preferable, but we'll accept photos as long as they clearly show the end of each challenge with your final score displayed. You heard.



SUPER MONKEY BALL



Your fastest time on the Frozen Highway stage in Monkey Race…

1	Dave Everey, Cheshire	1:28:36
2	Stephen McPhail, Cumbria	1:32:30
3	Kevin Murphy, Darlington	1:35:52
4	Richard Jolly, Hampshire	1:44:42
5	Ben Kisby, Yeovil	1:47.74



Highest score on Monkey Target (with Wheel of Danger turned off).

1	Dave Everey, Cheshire	8,970
2	Adam Williams, Exeter	4,380
3	Will Prendergast, Berkshire	3,020
4	Richard Freeman, Derbyshire	1,000
5	Ben Turner, Kent	380

Your fastest time on Advanced Floor 2 in the Main Game.

1	Simon Mason, Bournemouth	50.94
2	Janne Kaitila, Finland	51.12
3	Dave Everey, Cheshire	54.85
4	Dan Colley, Ipswich	58.56
5	Billy Keach, Essex	60.04

We'll want a picture of your monkey crossing the finish line for the first challenge, but a simple picture of the results screen will suffice for the other two. And don't forget to turn the Wheel of Danger off for the second challenge – there's really no point. At all.

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MAILBOX

STAR LETTER

WIN YOURSELF A BRAND-NEW GAMECUBE GAME!



'Beady eye'

Have you noticed how as games 'mature' they seem to involve increasingly complex storylines? I agree with your statement that games don't need plots to be enjoyable, especially multiplayer/shooter/puzzle games. But I've also noticed that the whole industry is becoming more commercial, and I think we're all beginning to lose focus on what's really needed: gameplay. Swamped with image and style, it's hard to take any of the new TV trailers or magazine advertisements seriously. They boast about lots of modes and features, yet we have to rely on patient and careful reviewers to see if the actual game would appeal to us – or whether it actually manages to excite the player as much as it claims to. I'm not saying games with stories are wrong. In fact, left to develop and grow in the hands of good storytellers, a good plot can help to craft gorgeous games like *Eternal Darkness* or *Metroid Prime*, and hopefully even better new projects. (I'm keeping my beady eye on Silicon Knights – remember *Too Human*?). I feel jaded by the direction of many companies out to make money. My faith in Nintendo, however, remains mostly unshaken. I can't wait to hear the details of *Mario Kart* at E3 next year (fingers crossed)!
Richard Townrow, via email

Simply put, it's easy to sell a game like a movie or DVD, relying on story and flashy visuals and easily-recognisable hooks. Publishers don't want to confuse people with talk of gameplay and videogaming jargon, and as games become more mainstream, you'll see a more mainstream approach to selling them. However, have you seen the ad for the new* Harry Potter *game? It doesn't actually contain any gameplay footage, does it? Hmm. Ed

'Area of things'

I'm worried about what is going to happen to the Gamecube. From what I have heard almost everywhere, the Gamecube is trailing behind the Xbox and PlayStation 2 in the sales area of things. As a Dreamcast owner from the start I am extra worried, as I thought the Dreamcast would never flop – it had a great array of games (like the Gamecube has), and was generally a good all-round console, but then something happened, it all went pear shaped, and Sega packed it in. What I'm trying to get at is this – Gamecube, even though it is a great console, is going to flop because of the fact that the public is more interested in DVD capabilities and online games, none of which the Gamecube has at the moment. Most people can't see past the hype of PS2 and the add-ons of Xbox to realise what a great console the Gamecube is.
Ross Woodford, York

We can understand your fears, although we don't agree with them. Just before Christmas, Gamecube sales shot through the roof in Japan and the console, incredibly, was only 1,000 units away from PS2 – Xbox managed to sell just over 1,000 units total. Gamecube sales in the US have rocketed too, due mainly to the extraordinary success of* Metroid Prime *and* Resident Evil Zero*, overtaking Xbox considerably. While it's true that the Cube lags behind here in the UK, mainly due to the lack of a true event title for Christmas (why on earth didn't they release* Metroid *simultaneously with the US? Why?), as long as good games are out there, it'll sell. And frankly, quality software and affordable prices are what matter, not DVD playback or online capability. Ed



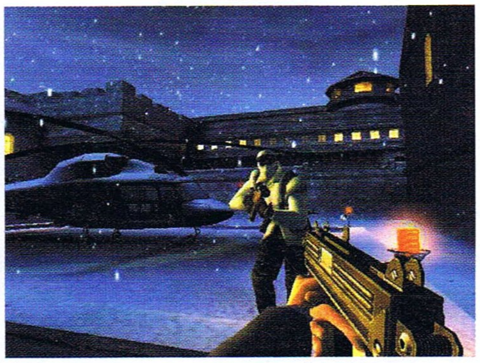
Bonus Letters

If it was too hard you would moan about it being too hard so I say live with it.
Jon Moss, via email
Your logic is peerless. Ed

I might be sending a special Xmas package… it's not anthrax or my sox.
Susannah Gill, via email
Then what on earth could it be? Ed

I read about that game once or twice, and it disappeared from my cycloptic radar thing.
Ruud Jacobs, Holland
Well, that's the problem with cycloptic radar things, after all. Ed

But don't worry – I'm not dying! No, I'm just not renewing my subscription.
Keith Cathcart, via email
"Hurrah!" Closely followed by "Boo!" Ed



△ Another shootout, of sorts – *007 Nightfire* compared to *GoldenEye*. Does the latest Bond really beat Rare's gem?

'Flat and dull'

I am writing once again to complain about your biased reviewing. I am talking about the new Bond game, *Nightfire*. You seem to think that *GoldenEye* is the best shooter ever made, and I'll admit it is one of them, but it has been bettered. *GoldenEye*'s only driving levels were flat and dull, with civilians running in front of your tank, and some of the FPS levels were really crap (eg, Depot, Archives, Jungle), and the multiplayer's been improved upon. *Nightfire*'s driving levels are superb, if a little shortlived, some of the FPS levels outshine even a few of *GoldenEye*'s greats. And anyway, the AI in *GoldenEye* was rubbish. In response to your criticism of the game, the on-rails bits were at least new ideas (*GoldenEye* never had 'em), and how are the guns boring? These are the most Bond-like guns in a while. You're reviewing a BOND game, and it should be judged on not only gameplay, but how much like the Bond movies it is. Thank God I bought the brilliant *Nightfire* before I read your review, as I might have been convinced otherwise.
Jason Yardley, via email

Well, it's great that you're enjoying the game so much. Horses for courses, and so on. But will you be playing it in five years' time, like with* GoldenEye*? We don't think so. It might be showing its age, but Rare's classic still outshines* Nightfire *considerably. There's no freedom in* Nightfire *–* GoldenEye *gives you the tools and lets you tackle a level how you like;* Nightfire *shepherds you from cut-scene to cut-scene. The guns lack individuality – they're not diverse enough and they have no personality. In* GoldenEye*, you knew that, say, a Soviet would be more effective in a given situation than a Deutsch. There's no such balance or considered design thought in* Nightfire*. These and a hundred other things. It's beautifully presented, but* Nightfire *manifestly lacks the heart and invention to make it a great game. Ed

'Completely overlooked'

You have to applaud Microsoft – they saw the potential of Rare and bought them just before Christmas. This

HONOURABLE MENTIONS
Thanks to everyone else who wrote, emailed and texted us this month.

You included: Chris Coats, via email; Mark Spivey, Kennington; Glen Latour, via email; Paul MacLeod, via email; Richard Pollock, via email; Richard Shorrock, via email; Sam Clutton, via email; Steve Bowman, via email; Chris Perry, vie email; Grimur Dellsen, Iceland; Laurence Morton, Eastleigh; Eddie Hemsley, via email; Roboute Guilleman, Macragge; Simon Hunkin, via email; Alex Lesser. Bury St. Edmunds; Matthew Weavil, via email; Luke Gill, via email; Tom Arnold, via email; Mark Nisbet, via email; Harry Tillet, via email; Janet Hughes, via email; Joseph Wiggins, via email; Ramandeep Singh, via email; Kubla Khan, Stately Pleasure Dome; Marc Gibson, via email; Michael Kalinski,

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Console 'wars', Microsoft and Rare (again), tunnels, poo cakes and, er, more.

tactical move has worked – I've noticed the sudden increase of sales for the black slab of concrete. This leaves me worried – I remember the N64 days where me and my PlayStation-owning friends had multiplayer fun on *Perfect Dark*. They said they would never buy a Nintendo console – if they did it would only be for Rare games. They all bought Xboxes a couple of months after its release, so they must be pleasantly surprised. What I'm trying to say is that Nintendo completely overlooked the importance of Rare. Sure, they got a lot of money out of it to pay off that hefty fine, but they also just lost potential console-shifting games. Millions of Nintendo owners must be tempted to buy an Xbox just for Rare games – I don't blame them. We've still got loads of brilliant games to play, but I wouldn't be surprised if Nintendo eventually lose the console wars.
Geoffrey Dobson, via email

***As we've said in reply to Ross' letter above, we don't think Nintendo are going to lose any 'console war'. But the Rare situation did, and still does, inspire a lot of feeling in gamers – however, the Gamecube is about much more than the loss of a single developer, no matter how high profile. Just look at Capcom's overwhelming support for the machine. But to be frank, we reckon people are tempted to buy an Xbox purely because it's such good value for money. £199 for a console and four top-notch games? Amazing. Where's the Gamecube equivalent, hmm?* Ed**

'Makes me vomit'

I have just witnessed to my absolute horror the Christmas top 20 games-selling chart. *Mario* wasn't in it. Yep. The concept of *Scooby-Doo and The Cyber Chase* selling more than one of the best games Nintendo has ever made makes me vomit. I don't know how the games have done in the US and Japan, but I think Nintendo only have themselves to blame for this.
N K Harry, via email

***Shocking, isn't it? Makes you wonder, worryingly, if the games market has indeed 'grown up'. While we would, of course, always take the breathtakingly realised day-glo world of Mario over generic gun-game no. 73 every time, it seems that perhaps people want more 'grown up' games these days. Then again, it could be that Nintendo have missed the ball with their advertising and pricing policies this year (despite maintaining a constant and welcome presence on telly). We probably shouldn't mention that Xbox bundle again, but…* Ed**

'I am not stupid'

I am a 17-year-old doing my A-levels in sixth form. I got over 5 GCSEs (one an A in English) and am considering dropping out of my A-levels to get some sort of journalism qualification. My English teacher told me to at least get some advice from somebody in that situation, and since I have been subscribing to your magazine since around issue 10, I thought you would be the ideal people to ask, considering that my dream job would be to work for a games magazine! So, I was wondering what type of qualifications I should go in for. I am not stupid and I know it will take a lot of hard work, and even if I get the qualifications, I know it is not an easy job. But it is something I really want to do, and I would really be grateful if you can spare the time and give me your advice.
Stuart Cairns, via email

***Well, we would say: don't drop out of your A-levels. Seeing them through and getting the qualifications will be the most useful thing you can do at the moment. You've got plenty of time to get some recognised journalism credentials, but A-levels will open up doors to university and college (if you want to go), and show that you can work hard. Also, the one thing magazine editors look for is an excellent grasp of English (obviously, in the games industry, a knowledge of the subject matter helps too). Myself, Martin and Geraint all got into the industry simply by being able to write well. We can't stress that enough. But whatever you do, keep your options open. Games journalism can be fun, but the chances are that you'll never get rich from it…* Ed**

via email; Jerry Ant, Merthyr Tydfil; Paul Stevenson, Redditch; Jon Moss, via email; Alex Cole, via email; Sam Wallis, via email; Richard Tanner, vie email; James Smith, via email; Tony Le Mesmer, Norwich; Danny Boy, the Pipes are Squeaking; Elisa Azure, via email; Michael Jones, via email; Scott Saunders, via email; And more!

Bonus Letters

Please send an email reply, as obviously, I would be unable to read a reply in your magazine.
Jickle from Oz, Oz
***Unfortunate.* Ed**

What are they trying to do, MAKE us read Japanese?
Henrique Alves, via email
***It's just one big sinister conspiracy.* Ed**

Do you agree with my observations?
Chris Lowe, via email
***Apart from the one about pigs being a sound investment.* Ed**

I also wish to know the circumference of a hippopotamus' belly.
Shaun Griffin, via email
***Roughly the same as Geraint's after his one o'clock meat binge.* Ed**

Like Jud in a tank mass-murdering loads of clampers.
Daniel Rouse, via email
***Quite terrifyingly, not outside the realms of possibility.* Ed**





'Scares me silly'

I don't normally feel the need to start ranting, but I feel I have been forced. I'm 19, and part of the 90s generation. I'm sure some of you are in the same generation as me, and I'm sure you listened to Scatman when younger (*What? You too! – Ed*), and got all excited when portable CD players were released or even when CDs started outselling tapes (*Dan remembers when 78s started outselling wax cylinders – Ed*). But I've been hearing a phrase over the past few weeks – a phrase that, for some reason, has been slapped on our generation, a 'classification' if you will, of the 18-to-24 age group, as far as I can make out. Frankly, this classification scares me – it scares me silly, no less. It wouldn't bother me so much had I not heard it said repeatedly in a short space of time on TV and by the general public – yes, I'm worried it's becoming a mainstream classification. This phrase is the irreverent utterance 'The PlayStation generation'. Now, I'm sure there's a few people out there that are not bothered by this (insignificant fools). However, I AM bothered by this. Why can't people use the phrase 'Nintendo generation' I could live with that and – shock horror – I may even be able to cope (just) with 'Xbox generation', but 'PlayStation generation' is frankly criminal. I think being a magazine of your stature you should also be concerned by this phrase that is contaminating peoples' minds, and do something about it. I say we stand up and fight, we shouldn't let ourselves be falsely classified, it's wrong and immoral. Next time I hear somebody say it I'm worried I may hurt them.
Aaron M, via email

***Well, at least it's a better label than "the glue-sniffing generation", or "the blank-eyed zombie youth generation". But arguably not as good as "the Thatcher took our milk generation". Possibly.* Ed**

'Utter tosh'

In response to a query from Riff of London in **NGC**/74, regarding his Gamecube connection to a Widescreen monitor, you wrote that playing a game "…in widescreen mode… will stretch the picture, making everything look slightly squashed with a loss of resolution…"! This is actually utter tosh. A widescreen picture only loses resolution when stretched vertically not horizontally. This is exactly what a DVD means when it states on the packaging that it's "enhanced for widescreen TVs" or has "anamorphic widescreen". A TV's resolution is actually identical, whether 4:3 or 16:9.
Craig Marcellus, via email

CORRECTION CORNER

Wrongs righted! (Does that make us superheroes?)

The competition in issue 75 says you can win all this *Resident Evil* film stuff. Very good prizes, but You spelled the song by Slipknot wrong. You called it *Plague* when everyone knows it's called *My Plague*. Dolts!
Name not supplied

***Pah. It's not even proper music. Geraint, where's the euphonium?* Ed**

I was shocked by your lack of vigilance in issue 75. You managed to post a picture of a glock or a beretta or something over HALF of James Hamilton's letter. Let's keep with the program, huh?
Jack Eden, via email

***This, straight from the art monkeys' hooting gobs: "The clipping path didn't force the text to run around the image properly". Shorthand version: bad monkey, no bananas for you.* Ed**

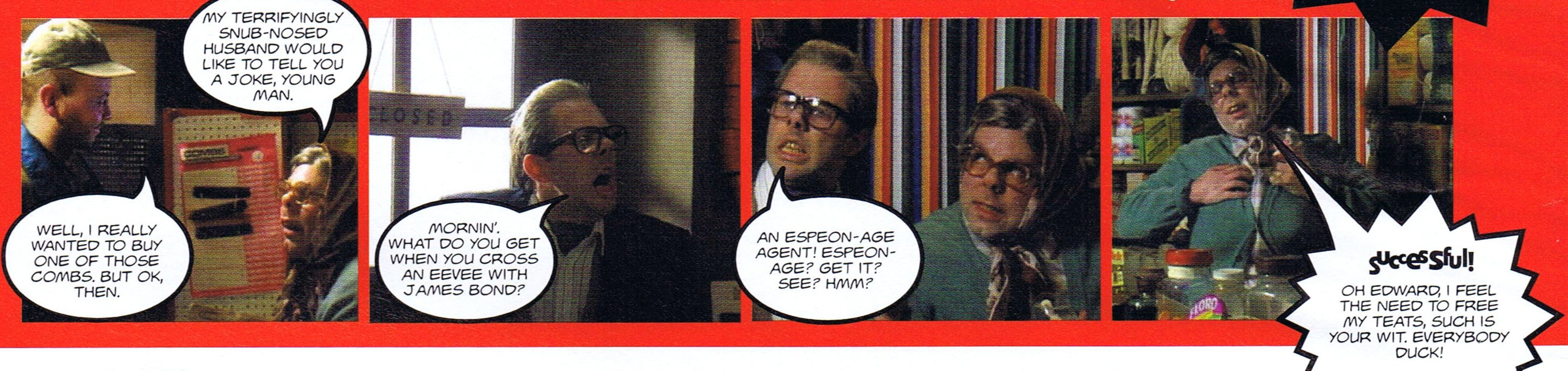


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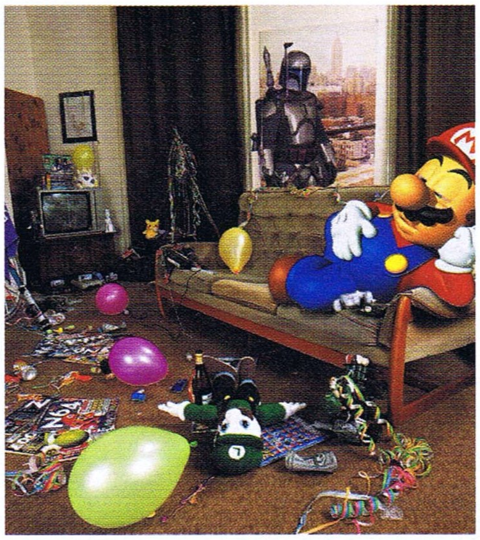


You misunderstand. We were talking about stretching a non-widescreen game to fit a widescreen telly – like, say, playing* Mario Sunshine *on a widescreen telly and having to choose the 'wide' or 'cinema' option on the TV remote, thus stretching the image - a situation where there's plenty of resolution loss. Let's hope this doesn't turn into a debate of "Rare are in Warwickshire/ Leicestershire" proportions… Will any side ever concede victory? Where will it all end? Does anyone actually care? And so on. Ed

'It kicks ass'

I have a very large bone to pick with you. In last issue's EndGC, Mario has a Gamecube, an N64 and a SNES. How come he doesn't have a NES! I've got a Gamecube but I've also got a NES and it kicks ass. Well, maybe the controller sucks, but you should still praise Nintendo for such a great thing.
Ian, Leigh-on-Sea

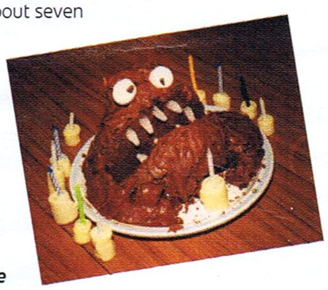
He, er… broke it. Or it was in the cupboard. Will that do? Cough. Ed



△ Erm. Mario's NES is over to the left of the TV. Just out of shot, alas. (*Got away with that one, methinks – Ed.*)

'Great mighty poo'

This year, the night before my birthday, I was bored and decided to have a read of my old mags. While I was reading I came across a picture of the Great Mighty Poo from *Conker's BFD*, so with about seven hours' notice I asked my mum to sculpt my ordinary-flat-and-round chocolate cake into a sculpture of the opera-singing poo monster. I hope you like it.
David Sermon, North Yorkshire



Excellent! And not only were you prepared to eat a cake based on mobile fecal matter, your mother was also willing to create such a beast. Bravo! We hope it was nice. "Probably nutty", says Martin. Ed

'Dig tunnels under'

Due to Nintendo's failure to deliver *Animal Crossing* to UK gamers, I would like **NGC** to organise a petition to get this wonderful game a British release. It worked for *Super Smash Bros* on the N64, so I believe that this is the only way we can get Nintendo Europe and 'Greener' to listen to our plight. If this doesn't work, I think we should put up treehouses and dig tunnels under Nintendo Europe until they give in to us. Let's get to work, people!
DJ Fryer, Devon

We'd love nothing more than to see Animal Crossing appear in the UK. And there's still no confirmed UK release. So, if you fancy adding your voice to the cause, send a letter marked 'Tom Nook Forever!' to us at the usual address. And speaking of Greener, he popped over from Germany to see us the other week. He looked very tired, and the constant sausage diet had done his jowls no favours. Ed



SO TELL ME THIS…

We know the word *before* it's on the street. Yep. Well, sometimes.

1. Have you got any more news on a UK release for *Animal Crossing*?
2. When will FreeLoader be out?
3. Is there likely to be another Mario game (like *Sunshine*) on the Gamecube, or will we have to wait for GC2?
4. Do you think GC2 will be a cube? It would be a bit stupid to call it Gamecube 2 if it wasn't!
Harry Rowe, Crewe

1. 'Fraid not. But we're hoping against hope.
2. Your guess is as good as ours - it keeps getting delayed.
3. Yes - Shigsy himself has confirmed this. See our Newsdesk pages for details.
4. We're hoping for a dodecahedron.

1. Do you have an estimated date for when the new Zelda game is coming out?
2. Are there any Lord of the Rings games coming out for the Gamecube?
3. When is *Zelda: A Link to the Past* coming out for the GBA?
4. Will the art monkeys ever stop making mistakes?
Jamie Briggs, via email

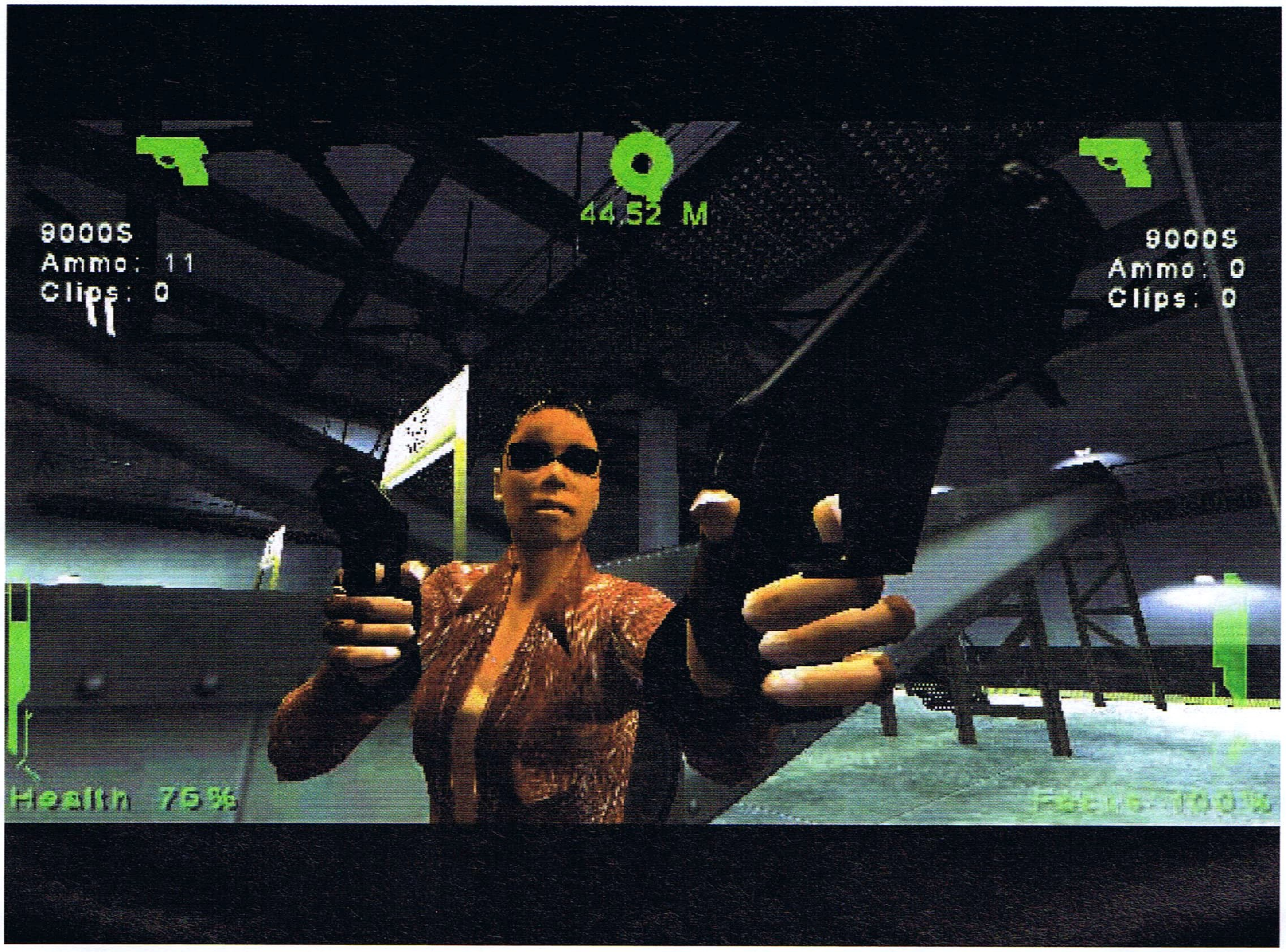
1. Officially, Q2 2003. Which, in real money, means Easter/early summer, realistically. Metroid's *currently 'primed' (ha!) for arrival on 31 March, so April or May is a safe bet for Zelda.*
2. Yup. Keep your peepers peeled for The Two Towers*, which will be out early-ish this year.*
3. Again, Q2 2003 – expect it close to The Wind Waker's *release date.*
4. Only when your grandma starts sucking eggs, or Paul's pigs start making money, whichever comes first.

1. When – if ever – is *Auto Modellista* coming out on the Cube?
2. Will there be any *Grand Theft Auto* titles coming out for GC?
3. What is *Viewtiful Joe* about?
4. Will *True Crime: Streets of LA* be as good as *Grand Theft Auto*?
Lee Machin, Manchester

1. Unfortunately, Capcom have since confirmed the game as a PS2 exclusive. Fortunately, the game is utter, undiluted cack.
2. No, no and no. Not for the next three years or so at least - the length of exclusivity Sony have on the series.
3. Joe is a superhero. And he's… viewtiful! (Hnnngh.)
4. Possibly, Lee. But then, possibly not.

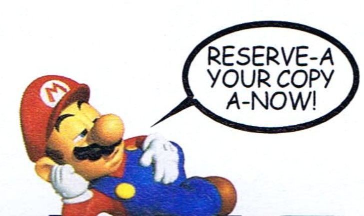
1. Is *Metroid Prime* really 'all that', as Americans like to say?
2. On a scale of one to ten, how hard was it to fit an Afterburner kit to a GBA?
3. I completely agree with your *Mario Party 4* review.
4. Are Left Field developing a Gamecube sequel to the magnificent *Excitebike 64*?
Tom Riccick, Bolton

1. Indeed, it is 'all that' and much, much more. You could even say it 'rocks'. If you were a cretin.
2. Martin says seven. The soldering was fiddly but the real challenge was not getting dust on the screen (ie, impossible). Get a shop to fit it for you.
3. Good.
4. Unfortunately not, as they're no longer a Nintendo second-party developer.



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HANDS ON WITH...
URA ZELDA

The greatest game ever made comes to Gamecube – with a twist.



In an astonishing display of generosity on Nintendo's part, Japanese gamers who pre-ordered *Zelda: The Wind Waker* also received a wonderful free gift. Nothing less than the N64's crowning glory, *Zelda: Ocarina of Time*, in fact; ported over to Gamecube and complete with a raft of desirable extras, not the least of these being *Ura Zelda*, the never-released, created-for-64DD version of the game. But will European gamers get the same treatment? We're hopeful – but for now, join us as we take a good, long look at the Japanese version.



The menu screen gives you two main options – the left-hand picture of Link (in the red box) or the right-hand picture of Link (the blue box).



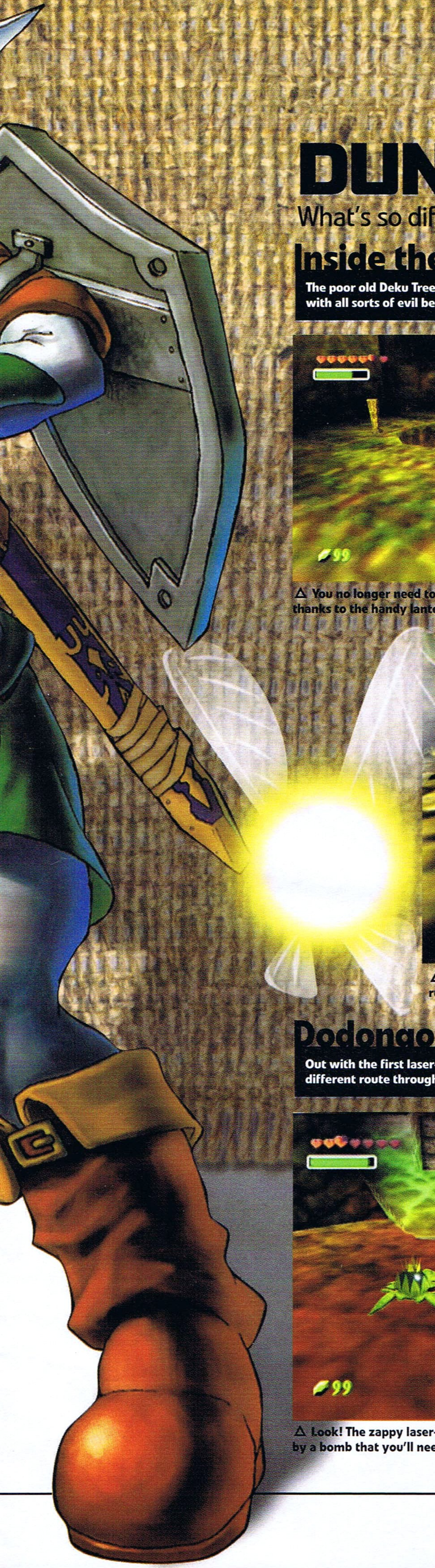
The left-hand box is the *Ocarina of Time* that we all know and love. The right-hand box is more interesting, as it takes you to *Ura Zelda*...



...but backtracking a bit, if you press Z at the menu screen you get access to a pile of video footage of forthcoming games.



There's *F-Zero*, the five new Capcom games, plus *Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles* on the GBA, and a whole lot more.



DUNGEON MASTER

What's so different about *Ura Zelda*, then? It's all down to the dungeons...

Inside the Deku Tree

The poor old Deku Tree – not only is he a tree, and thus not particularly mobile (or even human), he's also been infested with all sorts of evil beasts. Expect to find Gohma eggs right from the start, and some much harder puzzles...



Δ You no longer need to high-dive through the cobweb, thanks to the handy lantern to the left, and Deku sticks.



Δ We were very surprised to find Gohma eggs this far outside the boss cave. Tricky little monkeys, they are.



Δ Giant Deku Babas also make an early appearance, too – this room had a Deku Scrub in it before, remember?



Δ Gravestones are all over the place, now, and often contain hearts or rupees. Shoot the bats before you approach the switch, or you'll get hurt.



Δ There's now much more combat inside the Deku Tree – but you can shoot the Gohma eggs before you get too close and they hatch. Cunning, no?

Dodongo's Cavern

Out with the first laser-eyed robot thing, in with more bomb-based puzzles and a slightly different route through the dungeon. Expect much block-pushing and lantern-lighting.



Δ Look! The zappy laser-eyed robot beast thing is gone, replaced by a bomb that you'll need to use in various ways to progress.



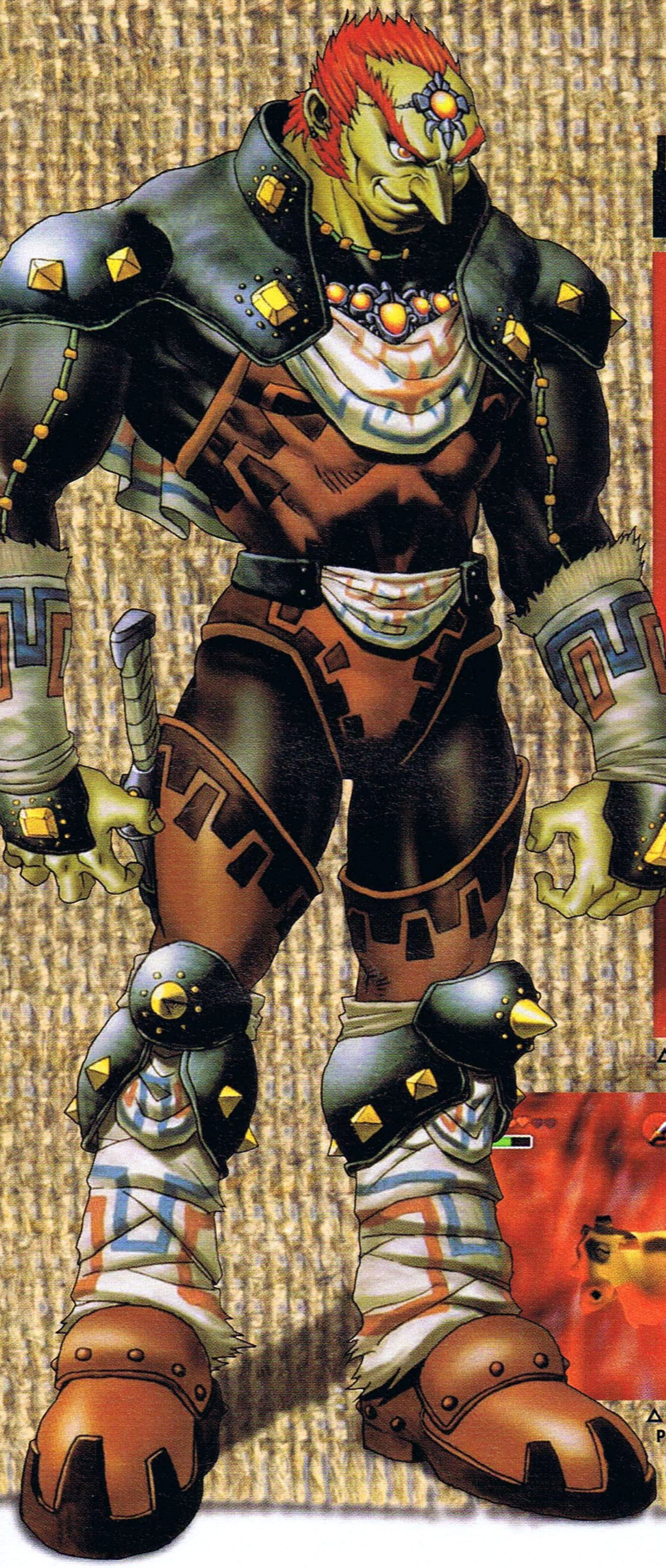
Δ You'll find a few puzzles that require you to set off chain-reactions of wall-mounted bombs. There are ghosts here, too.



Δ Told you! Ghosts! In Dodongo's cavern! That's a novelty, eh?



Δ Blowing up all the bombs here still activates the giant staircase.



Jabu-Jabu's Belly

Still the weakest segment of the game by a mile, but now with added cow-based comic relief. Sadly, there's still plenty of Ruto-carrying, although Barinade is just as impressive as before.



△ These big spongy beasts weren't here before, were they? Leap across via the lift-thing, or stun 'em with the boomerang and sneak.



△ Cows in walls, it's true. Presumably swallowed.



△ There's a theme here – plenty of big nasty monsters are introduced earlier in *Ura Zelda*.



△ The evil stingray things are just as annoying and painful as before. Dive down and hit the switch.

IN CONCLUSION...

What an astonishing freebie. One of the best games ever made, along with an alternate version? Blimey. We can only hope it arrives in the UK – but given that it's been confirmed for US pre-orders, we can't imagine the UK won't get the same treat. Fingers crossed, eh?

Surprisingly, however, while *Ocarina of Time* is still amazing, it's only amazing *once you get back into it*. Our first impression on booting it up was how much it's aged. While the game's resolution has been sufficiently upped for the Gamecube – gone is the N64 fuzz – the character models are surprisingly primitive-looking, and the environments particularly angular. Perhaps the hi-res beauty of *Smash Bros* and *Mario Sunshine* have spoiled us, but the march of time and progress has damaged this once-sterling jewel. The frame-rate hasn't been improved, either, with the same occasional stutter – but the game was hardly slow to begin with.

However, spend some time running around Kokiri Forest and the clumsy models become irrelevant as the art direction shines through. Wonderfully stylised grass; delicate shading and lighting; the earthy tones and just-so colouring; the sheer quality of light. All of these elements and more combine to create the illusion of a proper 'world'. It's still a hugely evocative game, and tellingly, the first sunset and sunrise still effect a manly tear. (Jabu-Jabu's Belly is still garish and unconvincing, but it was always a weak point). Perhaps more importantly, though, the sheer epic sweep of the game and the dazzling design remain splendidly impressive.

> **"THE SHEER EPIC SWEEP OF THE GAME AND THE DAZZLING DESIGN REMAIN SPLENDIDLY IMPRESSIVE"**

Controls are a mixed bag, although everything has been successfully mapped to the GC controller. The L shoulder-button works exactly like the N64's trigger, with R remaining as the shield button, but problems arise with the assigning of items to buttons.

Forest Temple

The twisted corridor is untwisted when you first find it, and there are a couple of real head-scratchers here. However, the defining moments remain – shooting ghost-paintings and gorgeous green courtyards.



△ The two Wolfos that confront you by the front door have gone. It's trickier inside, mind...



△ Yay! The twisted corridor is back! Don't think about it too much as it'll do your head in, Lovecraft style. Erk.



△ One of those lovely courtyards, complete with irritating, stone-sneezing Octoroks.



△ The Ocarina-activated blocks are apparent in the Forest Temple.



The Z-button takes place of the N64's Top-C, and is slightly niggly, and the Ocarina is played on the C-stick, making for occasional slip-ups as you hit the wrong direction. However, spend some time with the game and these initial worries cease to annoy.

But onto *Ura Zelda* itself, the main reason why this package is so exciting. First, the bad news – it's not the wholesale remix of *Ocarina of Time* we were all expecting. Originally intended for the 64DD, the much-fancied but ultimately inconsequential disk-drive add-on for the N64, *Ura Zelda* never actually appeared. In the wake of *Ocarina of Time*, Shigeru Miyamoto spoke of both *Ura Zelda* and 'Zelda Gaiden' (the latter became *Majora's Mask* on the N64) and much was made of the fact that with the 64DD and *Ura Zelda* you'd be able to experience totally new dungeons and areas within *Ocarina of Time* (the disk would 'hook' into the N64 cart).

WIND WALKER OF CHANGE

But, as always, something seems to have been lost in translation, as *Ura Zelda* simply offers different puzzles in the dungeons, and that's it. No new areas (as least, we've played quite a way in and haven't found any yet), and the game is physically identical to *Ocarina of Time*. The dungeons, room by room, are the same. Progression through them is largely untouched. It's really just what you *do* within them that has changed, along with item placement, object movement and monster encounters – you'll now fight the more dangerous beasties much earlier on.

Inside the Deku Tree is a good example; head up to the first-floor walkway and you'll find Gohma eggs instead of the Skulltulas on the vine-wall. And you no

Fire Temple

If you haven't got Din's Fire by this point, travel back in time and get it, as it's essential for progress here. Predictably, there are more fire-based puzzles here – and some really nasty monsters.



△ It was pant-wetting to see an Iron Knuckle so early in the game. Mind the axe!



△ This fire ifrit-type thing is both new and a right swine to beat.



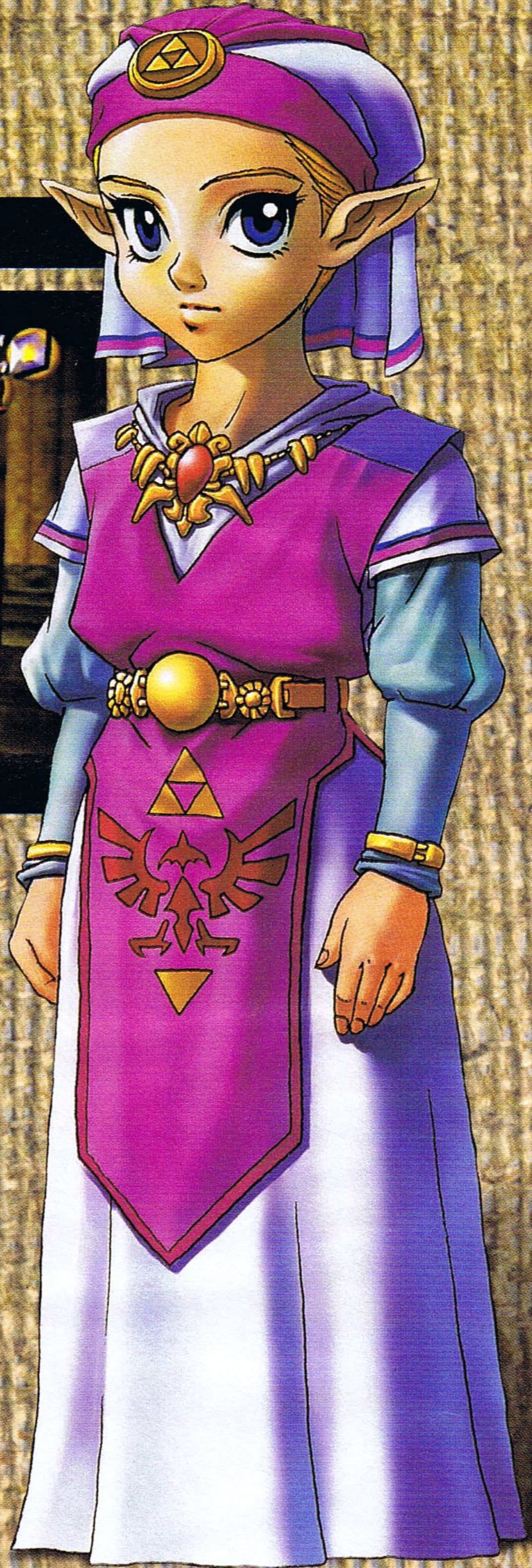
△ We weren't expecting this fire-wall – simply hop up the sides to avoid it, and do Din's Fire at the top.



△ Din's Fire – you'll need it in the first room.



△ Light the lanterns to open the left-hand cage.



longer have to dive off the ledge to break the webbing covering the hole – once you've got some Deku sticks and activated the lanterns, you can just burn it away.

This rejigging is echoed throughout the dungeons – different puzzles are the key to *Ura Zelda*. Jabu-Jabu's Belly is still irritating, and you still have to carry around Princess Ruto and boomerang the worryingly phallic tentacles, but there are now cow heads on walls that open doors (obviously, *Ura Zelda's* designers had a bit of fun with it) and a raft of new put-the-crate-on-the-switch teasers.

Things, however, get harder once you become adult Link. The 'adult' dungeons are trickier anyway, but the reason for tinkering with the dungeon puzzles becomes apparent here – to give seasoned *OOT* players more of a challenge. Tellingly, in the US *Ura Zelda* is being referred to as the 'Master Quest', and while we've still managed to muddle through it in Japanese, it *is* slightly more testing than the original. In most cases this is because a bit of thought's been put into how to make the puzzles more fiendish – but occasionally they've just been made fiddlier. There seems to be more reliance on lighting a sequence of lanterns, for example (especially in the Deku Tree and Fire Temple), which is less irritating once you've got Din's Fire, but still workmanlike gaming next to the exquisitely-fashioned evil that is, say, the Water Temple.

PAST IMPERFECT

It's easy – perhaps shocking, given that this is Nintendo – to say the game lapses into shoddy design every so often, but there is nonetheless the occasional blip that's not quite 'right', or simplistic, or repetitive rather than exciting. Another example can be seen in Dodongo's cavern; there's a door on the right of the main room that can't be blown open, as it's too far to carry bombs to. The only way we found was to head to the top of the room, grab a bomb from a plant, and simply jump down to the door, inevitably taking damage. Not very clever, that (but, of course, there may have been a hint saying just what to do that we couldn't read. Pah!).

Ura Zelda is, in truth, not the astounding new adventure we'd hoped for. It's wonderful because it revisits an astonishing game, and offers seasoned *Ocarina* veterans a slightly fresh experience; it's annoying, however, because not all its changes are for the better, and the pleasure of experiencing new bits is diluted by some irritating design. But when all is said and done, think back to that first sentence; what an astonishing freebie, eh?

JES BICKHAM

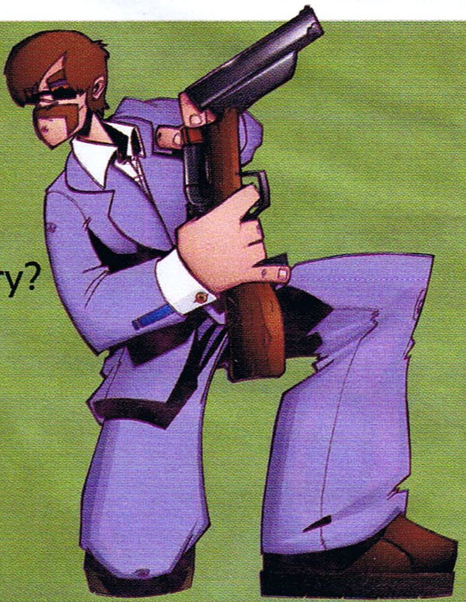

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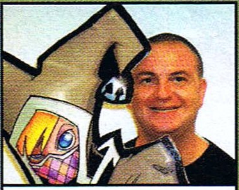
A 'HILARIOUS' JUMBLE SALE OF GAMES TRIVIA AND STALKING

NGC COMPENDIUM

TALK TIME

Want to know what it's like working in different areas of the games industry? This month we ask Mark Allen at Eidos about the hectic world of PR…





WHO IS... MARK ALLEN

Mark Allen is the PR Manager at Eidos. Currently working on the likes of *Blood Omen* and *Deus Ex: Invisible War*, his impressive portfolio of games on all formats includes *Hitman 2*, *Timesplitters 2*, *Champ Manager*, *Blood Omen*, and *Ace Golf*. To say he's a 'busy man' is an understatement…

8.15AM
Arrive at Wimbledon (where our offices are based). Park up and hit the life-giver that is Starbucks for a double espresso and a blueberry muffin. Stagger into the office and boot up my PC for an early morning fix of Unreal Tournament death and destruction to get me in the right frame of mind for the day. Being the first in the office, I can crank up the volume and amuse passers-by with a gratuitous "You suck!" emanating from my general direction.

8.50AM
Still on a caffeine high, I start to trawl through my overnight emails from the US office and hit the major websites from the US for all the overnight news. People start to turn up in the office now, so I had best turn down the Avril Lavigne album blasting out of the PC.

9.00AM
Get the post in, look through the latest magazines to arrive, mark out all the Eidos coverage, and look through the competitors' releases to see what we are up against.

9.30AM
Meeting with a producer and product manager to discuss a new title that's coming out later this year. It looks the business even at this stage and we bounce around ideas for the PR and marketing for it. I am then shown the proper way to play it by the producer who puts my gaming skills to shame, once again. After a few attempts I can finally manage it.

11.00AM
Get back to my desk to about 100 new emails and five voicemails from people wanting new screenshots and artwork for various games. I try and answer as many as I can straight away as deadlines are looming for some magazines.

12.00PM
Finally get my inbox down to a respectable 20 unread messages and start to prepare an announcement press release for our 'new product'. Get interrupted by a few phone calls from magazines wanting the latest code and chasing release dates. I then remember that we have a department meeting at 2pm for a product-by-product update, so I need to get everything together pretty sharpish. Hunger takes over and I need some kind of sustenance.

1.15PM
The usual PR lunch is a pint and a burger at All Bar One, but seeing as it is the middle of the month and there are no journalists to take out, I have to settle for a sandwich and a can of coke at my desk. Speak with a couple of journalists and set up meetings for next week. It's always good to get in early.

2.00PM
Drop into the update meeting and present the PR plans for the coming few months. We go through the marketing and PR plans for all our current titles. It's good to see how everything is coming together. Afterwards, we have our own PR meeting where we fine-tune the plans with Steve, who is Head of Communications.

4.00PM
Come back to my desk to find a voicemail of a very stressed-out editor looking for a piece of artwork to go on the cover of their magazine. The main image for another game has fallen through and we have the chance to get our character on there. The cover has to go in 50 minutes. Try to upload to the FTP site, but the mag can't access it. It's too big to email and the art guys are having kittens. Get the CD on a bike courier and tell him to ride like the wind. (It made it to the magazine. Just.)

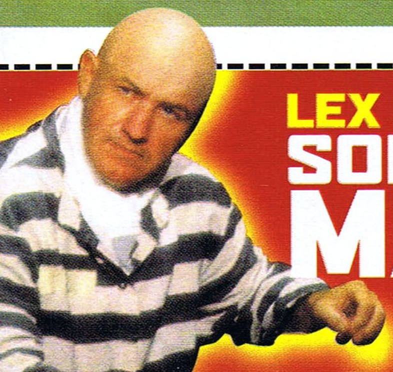
4.45PM
Just been invited to a launch event in London this evening. Phone around a few of the mags to see who is going. There will be loads of press guys there, so it looks like it will be a big night out.

5.00PM
Just received a new build of code for one of our PC titles. Install it and create a multiplayer battle with a couple of the marketing guys. Works very well, although I end up in second place behind after a closely fought battle. I'll go out next week and demo this version of the game to all the mags to secure some preview coverage.

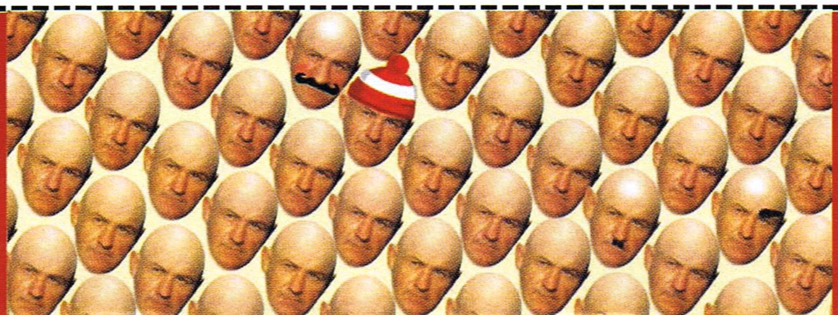
5.30PM
Go in for a worldwide PR conference call with all the main European and US offices. It's always good to hear about their individual approach to PR and how they plan to promote the titles in their country. We go over the coverage and worldwide exclusives, when we will release assets and when assets are available from the developers. It's always good to speak to the US because everything is always "awesome!" Go through the action points with Roxy, our PR assistant, and plan our strategy for each title.

6.25PM
Just enough time to have a multiplayer blast on Timesplitters 2 before we leave the office. Who would have thought you could have so much fun with plasma auto-rifles and monkeys? WHO?

8.30PM
Hit the party and meet up with friends old and new. Great venue, good music, free beer. It doesn't get much better than this! Now where did I leave my plastic bottle of Frosty Jack?



LEX LUTHOR'S SOLVE MY MAZE



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OR EMAIL: ngc@futurenet.co.uk

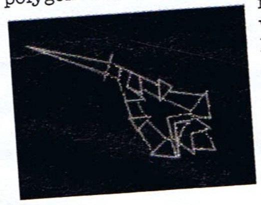
Last month's winner: Ross Wallis, Winchester

THE EVOLUTION OF...
BEAT-'EM-UPS

The endless struggle of good versus evil, combined with the wholesome fun of punching the crap out of your mates...

1 WARRIOR

The first one-on-one fighting game, from way back in 1979. Two 'warriors' (made of a handful of vector-graphic polygons) swung 'swords' (another polygon with a line through it) until a mortal blow was struck. For two players only, since artificial intelligence wasn't quite up to scratch in those days.

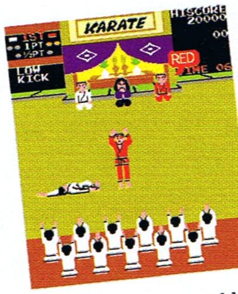


2 KUNG-FU MASTER

Guide Thomas, the Kung-Fu Master, through the Devil's Temple, where Mr X and the Five Sons of the Devil are holding his missus, Sylvia. Not only did this horizontally scrolling 1984 epic have many enemies to fight, it also had a story.



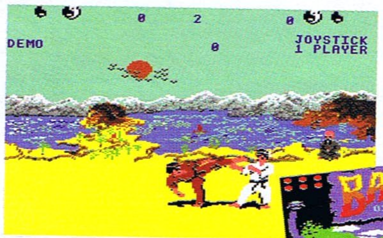
3 KARATE CHAMP



1984 also saw the first truly refined martial arts game. Two joysticks controlled one fighter, with bonus rounds that included dodging projectiles, smashing concrete blocks, and punching a bull in the face. With speech too.

4 WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST

Fighting games hit the big time on home computer formats with this 'realistic' brutality sim. Various attacks could be used to inflict big hurt on willing friends, with the best move being the eye-watering, kumquat-juicing punch to the nadgers, that left the unlucky victim doubled up in agony.



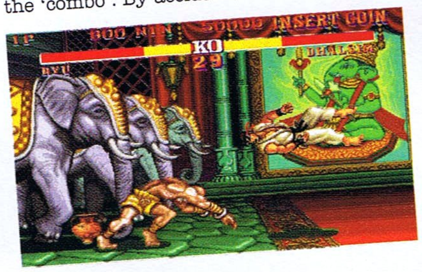
5 BARBARIAN

Not content with endangering a sprite's ability to pass on its DNA, Barbarian took things one step closer to sensational goredom. A basic, clunky fighting game was perked up by the presence of Page 3's Maria Whitaker and Wolf from Gladiators on the box, and the ability to sever heads and marvel at pixellated arterial spray.



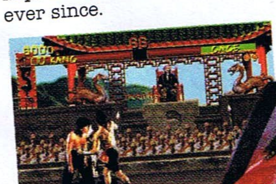
6 STREET FIGHTER II

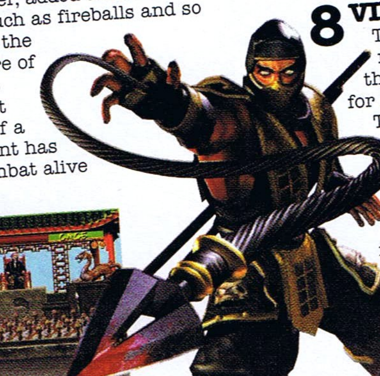
A bug in the game meant that players could input certain moves before the current one had been fully played out. It was a quirk that hardcore fans exploited to great effect, thus inventing the 'combo'. By accident!



7 MORTAL KOMBAT

With the Street Fighter series totally dominant, and untouchable in terms of in-depth gameplay, Midway took the 'revolutionary' digitised characters from the dire Pit Fighter, added a new set of fantasy moves such as fireballs and so on, and invented the 'fatality'. The lure of seeing a man rip the beating heart from the chest of a defeated opponent has kept Mortal Kombat alive ever since.





8 VIRTUA FIGHTER

The Sega game that took a resolutely 2D genre into the third dimension. Paved the way for Namco's more successful Tekken series, as well as sequel after sequel in the arcades and on home consoles. And without this, we would never have seen War Gods for the N64.



9 SOUL CALIBUR

Arguably the only 3D fighting game to surpass the creaky old Street Fighter series. Intuitive controls and easily understandable rules gave unprecedented freedom to kick digital ass in brand new ways. A simple knee to the plums would never be the same.



NGC TOP10

FATALITIES TOO STUPID FOR MORTAL KOMBAT

1 THE FARTALITY
The victor sits astride his fallen opponent's face and proceeds to squeeze a venomous, eggy gas directly into his nostrils. Instant death.

2 LEG RIPPER
Tear off the loser's leg and then beat him to death with the soggy end... Hang on, this was actually a real one from *Mortal Kombat 4*.

3 BORED TO DEATH
The winning character proceeds to explain his complete tedious background story, in excruciating (and fatal) detail.

4 SELF-CANNIBALISM
The loser gets locked in a kitchen where all the cupboards have child locks on them. Hunger soon forces him to eat himself.

5 OLD AGE
Both characters shake hands and apologise for being such thugs. They get married, move to Cambridgeshire, and survive into their 80s.

6 NUT ALLERGALITY
The loser is given a Marks & Spencer sandwich with the 'this product may contain nut traces' label scribbled out.

7 SANDY SMOOTH
Death via frantic analogue stick movements and a bit of coarse sandpaper wrapped around a brick.

8 POP IDOL
Gareth Gates and Will Young perform an hour-long medley of classic karaoke hits. Both characters commit suicide.

9 BLACKBOARD SCRAPE
Lethal headphones, through which is piped the amplified sound of 100 fingernails scratching a giant blackboard.

10 NOSTALGIALITY
An *MK* nostalgia show, with various talking heads showing off false memories of hilarious 1980s fashions.

GAMING PLANET

Your guide to the Nintendo world's most exotic games.

POKÉMON RUBY/SAPPHIRE



FACTS FOR THE TRAVELLER

GETTING THERE EU residents can import US packages from March
CURRENCY ¥4,800 (approx £25)
LANGUAGE Japanese
ELECTRICITY 3V DC power supply (2 x 1.5V AA cells)
POPULATION An estimated 75 million and rising
DEVELOPMENT Game Freak and Nintendo
HEALTH RISKS Becoming overrun with cute, useless tat.

Off the beaten track in beautiful Houen, the jewel in the crown of the Pokémon resort.





HISTORY

Having proved to be one of the world's most popular destinations over the last few years, almost every traveller will be familiar with Pokémon Island.

The island was first discovered in 1989 by the young adventurer Satoshi Tajiri. Pondering the technological possibilities offered by the new Game Boy link cables, he was inspired to create a way for the whole world to share the bizarre and adorable monsters that scampered through his dreams.

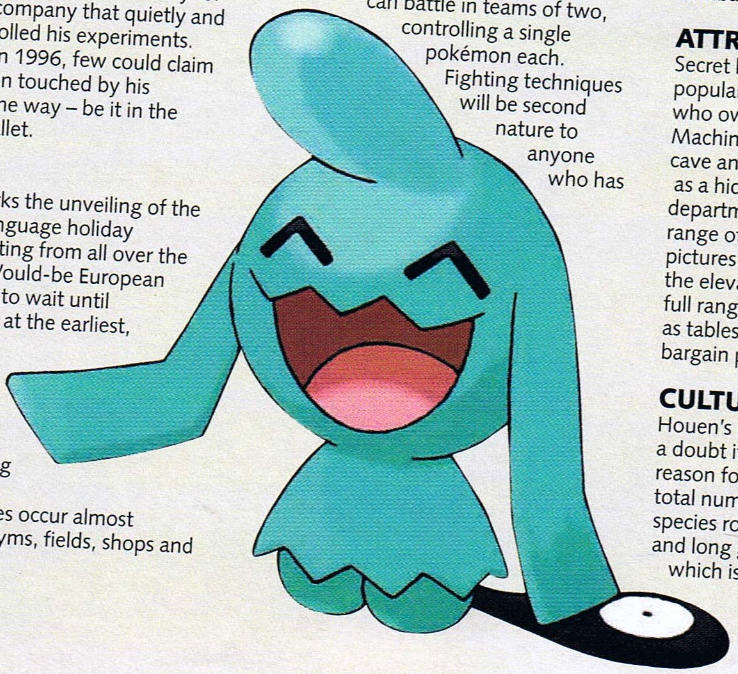
It took six long years, and a good deal of advice from master explorer Shigeru Miyamoto, before Tajiri was able to bring his vision to life. But it was certainly worth the wait, particularly for Nintendo, the company that quietly and patiently bankrolled his experiments. Since that day in 1996, few could claim not to have been touched by his discovery in some way – be it in the heart, or the wallet.

EVENTS

17th March marks the unveiling of the latest English-language holiday packages, departing from all over the United States. Would-be European visitors will have to wait until September 2003 at the earliest, but for hardy pioneers there's already plenty happening on the new Japanese-speaking island of Houen.

Pokémon battles occur almost continuously, in gyms, fields, shops and hideouts. The recently revised rules of combat allow a trainer to field two pokémon in a tag-team formation, allowing for some intriguing tactical possibilities. Alternatively, four trainers can battle in teams of two, controlling a single pokémon each. Fighting techniques will be second nature to anyone who has previously visited Kanto or Johto, but needless to say, there are many new moves and styles available to those who are inclined to delve further into the combat arts.





ATTRACTIONS

Secret bases are proving to be very popular distractions in Houen. Anyone who owns the correct Technical Machine (number 43) can excavate a cave and fill it with beautiful furniture as a hideaway. The Minamo City department store stocks an extensive range of secret-base decorations, from pictures to mats to throw cushions. Take the elevator to the fifth floor to view the full range. Alternatively, basic items such as tables and chairs can be found at a bargain price in Hiwamaki City.

CULTURE

Houen's richest cultural asset is without a doubt its thriving wildlife – the sole reason for the area's popularity. The total number of known pokémon species roaming Houen's woods, caves and long grass is thought to be 386, which is more than even the most

optimistic monster collectors could have hoped for.

Exotic creatures such as Treeko, Torchic and Mudkip join familiar household breeds such as Pikachu, Snorlax and Marrill. Few visitors will need any tuition in the art of capturing these creatures using pokéballs.

ACTIVITIES

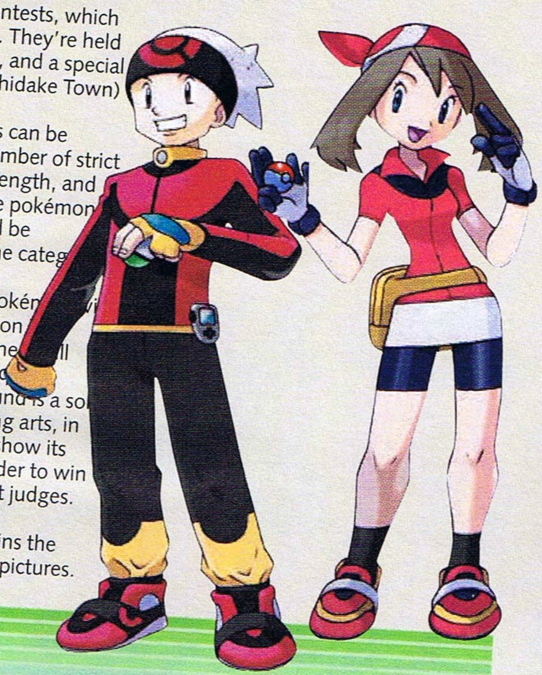
Look out for pokémon contests, which take place all over Houen. They're held in purpose-built buildings, and a special pass (available to buy in Shidake Town) is required to enter.

The two-round contests can be judged on any one of a number of strict criteria, such as beauty, strength, and intelligence. Obviously, the pokémon you choose to enter should be particularly impressive in the categ the day.

In the first round, your pokém receive bonus marks based on appearance, so veteran traine ll often visit a pokémon boutiq beforehand. The second round is a so demonstration of the fighting arts, in which your pokémon must show its complete array of skills in order to win points from a panel of expert judges.

FURTHER READING

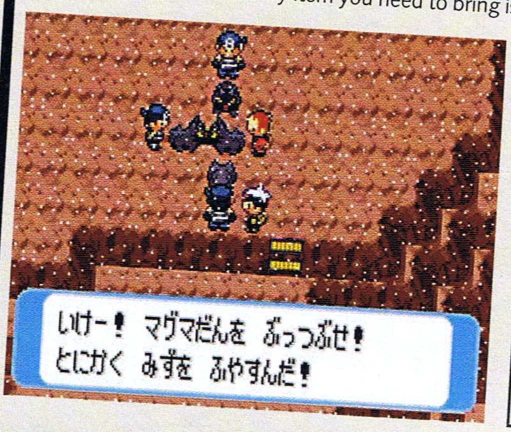
- www.nintendo.co.jp contains the latest information and travel pictures.
- www.pokemon.com will have more information, in English, from March.
- www.gamefreak.co.jp is a source of fine desktop artwork.
- www.nintendo.co.uk will have details of the UK release date. Some day.



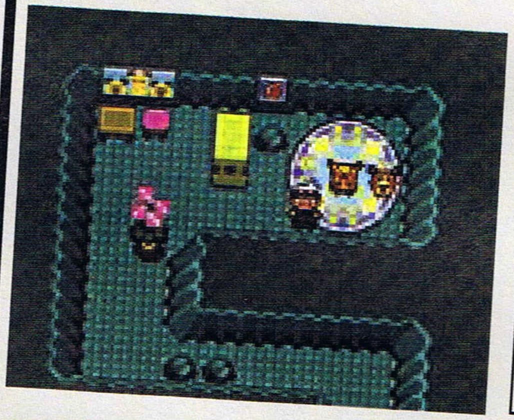


ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Vital supplies such as pokéballs and potions can be bought at many locations throughout Houen. The only item you need to bring is a Game Boy Advance.



1. Potholing is as popular an activity as ever. Houen is riddled with secret caves, often containing rare and elusive pokémon. When venturing underground, always ensure you have a Flash-equipped monster in your pocket.



2. A brand-new Navigator will be presented to all visitors shortly after arrival on Houen, so there's no need to pack your old Poké Gear. Navigator replaces all the old functions of the Pokédex, with details of new species.



3. Trains run with truly remarkable efficiency. Passengers rarely have to wait more than a few seconds for connecting services between cities. There is currently no service linking Houen with Johto and Kanto.



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The most magnificent game ever!
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DAVID GOSEN GANON deHAVILLAND
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OTHER FORMATS

A = 01
Age of Empires 2
Agent Under Fire
Alone in the Dark 4
Atlantis 3: New World
B = 02
Big Mutha Truckers
Blade 2
BMX XXX
Bond 007: Nightfire
Bounty Hunter: Star Wars
Broken Sword 2
Buffy The Vampire Slayer
Burnout
Burnout 2 Point of Impact
C = 03
C.Bandicoot: W.of Cortex
Champ. Manager 2002
Colin McRae Rally 3
Command & Conquer
Commandos 2
Conflict: Desert Storm
D = 04
D. Nukem: Time to Kill
David Beckham Soccer
Desert Storm (Conflict)
Devil May Cry
Digimon World
Digimon World 3
Dracula Last Sanctuary
Dracula Resurrection
Dragonball Z: Budokai
Driver
Driver 2
Dynasty Warriors 3
E = 05
Escape Monkey Island
F = 06
FIFA 2003
Final Fantasy 10
Final Fantasy 8
G = 07
Getaway
Ghost Recon
Gitaroo Man
Gran Turismo
Gran Turismo 3
Grand T Auto: Vice City
Grand Theft Auto 3
H = 08
Half Life
Halo
Harry Potter
Harry Potter Ch Secrets
Headhunter
Hitman 2: Silent Assassin
J = 10
J.Bond: Agent Under Fire
James Bond: Nightfire
James Bond: T. N. Dies
Jedi Knight 2
Jet Set Radio Future
K = 11
Kingdom Hearts
L = 12
L. of Kain: Soul Reaver 2
LMA Manager 2002
LMA Manager 2003
L. of Rings Two Towers
Lord of Rings: Fel. of Ring
M = 13
Martian Gothic
Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX 2
Max Payne
Medal of Honor Frontline
Metal Gear Solid 2
Minority Report
N = 14
Need for Speed H.Purs.2
Nightfire
O = 15
Onimusha 2
Onimusha: Warlords
OO7 Nightfire
P = 16
Parasite Eve 2
Player Manager 2002
Pro Evolution Soccer 2
Project Gotham Racing
R = 18
Ratchet and Clank
Red Faction
Red Faction 2
Res.Evil: C. Veronica X
Return to C. Wolfenstein
Robot Wars
Rocky
S = 19
Scooby Doo: 100 Frights
Sega GT 2002
Silent Hill
Silent Hill 2
Simpsons' Skateboarding
Sims: Deluxe
Smackdown! 4: Shut Y.M.
Soldier of Fortune
Soul Reaver 2
Spiderman The Movie
Splinter Cell
Spyro: Ent.the Dragonfly
Star Wars: Bounty Hunter
Star Wars: Jedi Knight 2
Stuntman
Summoner 2
T = 20
Terminator: Dawn of Fate
The Getaway
The Thing
The Two Towers
The World is not Enough
Time Splitters 2
Tom Clancy: Ghost Recon
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell
Tomb Raider
Tomb Raider 2
Tomb Raider 3
Tomb Raider 4
Tomb Raider 5
Tony Hawk's 3
Tony Hawk's 4
Turok: Evolution
Ty the Tasmanian Tiger
V = 22
Vice City, G.T.A.
W = 23
World Rally Champ.2 Ext.
Wreckless: Yakuza Miss.
WWE Smackdown! S.Y.M.
WWF Smackdown! J.B.I.
X = 24
X-Men: Next Dimension
Y = 25
Yu-Gi-Oh! F. Memories
0-9 = 27
007 Nightfire
Plus Many More...

N64

B = 02
Banjo Kazooie
Banjo Tooie
Beetle Adventure Racing
Blues Brothers 2000
Bomberman Hero
Buck Bumble
C = 03
Castlevania
Command & Conquer 64
Conkers Bad Fur Day
D = 04
Diddy Kong Racing
Doom 64
E = 05
ECW Hardcore Rev.
Excite Bike 64
Extreme G
Extreme G 2
F = 06
F1 World Grand Prix
FIFA 98
Forsaken
G = 07
Gex 3 Deep Cover Gecko
Goldeneye
J = 10
J. Bond: Goldeneye
Jet Force Gemini
L = 12
Legend of Zelda
Legend of Zelda: M.Mask
Lego Racers
Lylat Wars
M = 13
Majora's Mask
Mario 64
Mario Karts
Mario Tennis
Mission Impossible
Mortal Kombat Trilogy
P = 16
Perfect Dark
Pokemon Snap
Pokemon Stadium
Pokemon Stadium 2
R = 18
Rayman 2
Road Rash 64
S = 19
Shadowman
Shadows of the Empire
Star Wars: Rogue Squad.
Super Mario
Super Smash Brothers
T = 20
The World is not Enough
Turok 2
Turok: Dinosaur Hunter
Turok: Shadow Oblivion
W = 23
WWF Attitude
WWF No Mercy
WWF War Zone
WWF Wrestlemania '00
Y = 25
Yoshi's Story
Z = 26
Zelda
Zelda: Majora's Mask
0-9 = 27
1080 Snowboarding
Plus Many More...

GAMEBOY

A = 01
Action Man
Advance Mario
Aladdin
Alone in the Dark 4
Army Men 2
Azure Dreams
B = 02
B.Bunny Crazy Castle
B.Bunny Crazy Castle 4
B.Bunny Op. Carrot Patch
B.Simpson Esc. C. Deadly
Blade
Blue Pokemon
Bob The Builder
Buffy The Vampire Slayer
C = 03
Crazy Castle 4
Croc 2
Crystal Pokemon
D = 04
Dave Mirra BMX
Donkey Kong
Donkey Kong Land 2
Dragon Ball Z
Dragon War. Monsters 2
Dragon Warrior Monsters
Dragonball Z LS Warriors
G = 07
Gold Pokemon
H = 08
Harry Potter
I = 09
I.Jones: Infernal Machine
L = 12
L.of Zelda: Links Awake.
Legend of Zelda: Ages
Legend of Zelda: Seasons
Links Awakening (Zelda)
M = 13
Mr Nutz
O = 15
Oracle of Ages
P = 16
Pocket Bomberman
Pokemon Blue
Pokemon Crystal
Pokemon Gold
Pokemon Red
Pokemon Silver
Pokemon Trading Card
Pokemon Yellow
Power Rangers
Power Rangers: T. Force
R = 18
Rugrats
S = 19
Silver Pokemon
Spiderman
Spiderman 2: Sinister 6
Star Wars: Obi Wan Adv.
T = 20
The World is not Enough
Tomb Raider
Tony Hawk's 3
W = 23
Wario Land 3
Z = 26
Zelda
Zelda: Links Awake. DX
Zelda: Oracle of Ages
Zelda: Oracle of Seasons
Plus Many More...

G.B. ADV

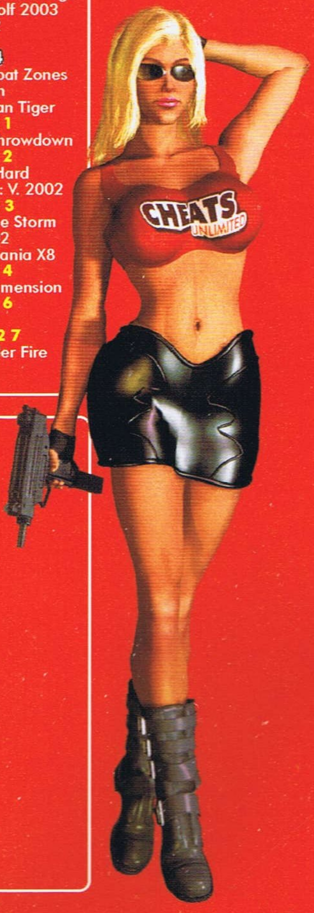
A = 01
Advance Wars
Aggressive Inline
Army Men: Op. Green
B = 02
Back Track
Ballistic: Ecks Vs. Sever 2
Bomberman Tournament
Breath of Fire
Britney's Dance Beat
Broken Sword
C = 03
Castlevania: C of Moon
Castlevania: Harmany D.
Crash Bandicoot XS
D = 04
Doom
Dragonball Z: L. Goku
Driver 2 Advance
Duke Nukem Advance
E = 05
Ecks Vs. Sever 2: Ballistic
F = 06
Final Fight One
G = 07
Golden Sun 1 & 2
GT Advance Champ.
Guilty Gear X
H = 08
Harry Potter 1 & 2
I = 09
Int. Super Soccer
J = 10
Jackie Chan Adventures
Jurassic Park 3: DNA Fact
Jurassic Park 3: P.Builder
K = 11
Klonoa: Empire of Dream
Konami Krazy Racers
L = 12
Legacy of Goku
M = 13
Mario Kart Super Circuit
Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX
Medabots AX
Mega Man Battle Net. 2
Megaman Zero
P = 16
Peter Pan: Ret.Neverland
R = 18
Rayman Advance
S = 19
S Palmer's Snowboarder
Sonic Advance
Spiderman The Movie
Spiderman: M's Menace
Spyro: Season of Ice
Street Fighter 2 Revival
Super Mario Advance 2
T = 20
Tekken Advance
The Land Before Time
Tony Hawk's 2
Tony Hawk's 3
Top Gun: Combat Zones
W = 23
Wario Land 4
WWF Rd to Wrestlemania
X = 24
X-Men: R. of Apocalypse
Y = 25
Yoshi's Island
Plus Many More...

GAME CUBE

A = 01
Agent Under Fire
Aggressive Inline
American Pro Trucker
Animal Crossing
B = 02
Batman Vengeance
Beach Spikers
BloodRayne
Bloody Roar: Primal Fury
BMX XXX
Bomberman Generation
Bond 007: Nightfire
Bond: Agent Under Fire
Bounty Hunter: Star Wars
Burnout
C = 03
Capcom vs. SNK: EO
Cel Damage
Chamber of Secrets
Clone Wars - Star Wars
Crash Bandicoot
Crazy Taxi
D = 04
Dave Mirra BMX 2
Dead to Rights
Die Hard: Vendetta
Dinosaur Planet (Starfox)
Disney's Magical Mirror
Doshin the Giant
E = 05
Eighteen Wheeler
Enter the Dragonfly
ESPN Int.Winter Sports'02
Eternal Darkness
Extreme G 3
F = 06
FIFA 2002 & 2003
Fifa World Cup 2002
Freekstyle
Frontline (M. of Honor)
G = 07
Gauntlet: Dark Legacy
Godzilla: D. all Monsters
Groove Adventure Rave
H = 08
Harry Potter C.of Secrets
I = 09
Int. Superstar Soccer 2
Int. Winter Sports 2002
J = 10
J McGrath's S'cross World
J.Bond: Agent Under Fire
James Bond: Nightfire
Jedi Knight 2
K = 11
Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer
L = 12
Legends of Wrestling
Legends of Wrestling 2
Lost Kingdoms
Luigi's Mansion
M = 13
Madden NFL 2002
Magical Mirror
Mario Party 4
Mario Sunshine
Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX 2
Medal of Honor Frontline
Metroid Prime
Minority Report
MX Superfly
Mystic Heroes
N = 14
NASCAR Thunder 2003
NBA 2K2 & 2K3
NBA Courtside 2002
NBA Live 2003
NBA Street
Need for Speed H.Purs.2
NFL Blitz 2002
NFL Q'back Club 2002
NHL 2003
NHL Hitz 2002
Nightfire
O = 15
OO7 Agent Under Fire
OO7 Nightfire
P = 16
Pac-Man World 2
Phantasy Star Online
Pikmin
R = 18
Red Card Soccer 2003
Resident Evil
Resident Evil Zero
Robotech: Battlecry
Rocket Power Bch.Bandits
Rocky
Rogue Leader
S = 19
Sanity's Requiem
Scooby Doo: 100 Frights
Sega Soccer Slam
Simpsons: Road Rage
Smugglers Run 2: Warz.
Sonic Adventure 2 Battle
Spiderman The Movie
Spy Hunter
Spyro: Ent.the Dragonfly
SSX Tricky
Star Wars: Bounty Hunter
Star Wars: Clone Wars
Star Wars: J. Knight 2
Star Wars: Rogue Leader
Starfox Adventures
Super Mario Sunshine
Super Monkey Ball 1 & 2
Super Smash Br Melee
T = 20
Tarzan Freeride
Tarzan Untamed
The Simpsons: Road Rage
Tiger Woods Golf 2003
Time Splitters 2
Tony Hawk's 3
Tony Hawk's 4
Top Gun: Combat Zones
Turok: Evolution
Ty the Tasmanian Tiger
U = 21
Ult.F.Champ: Throwdown
V = 22
Vendetta: Die Hard
Virtua Striker 3: V. 2002
W = 23
Wave Race: Blue Storm
World Cup 2002
WWE Wrestlemania X8
X = 24
X-Men: Next Dimension
Z = 26
Zoocube
0-9 = 27
007 Agent Under Fire
007 Nightfire

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